

CROSSROADS ASIA

UN Committee Obliges Uzbekistan to Investigate Accusations of Torture

Mutabar Tadjibayeva says she was subject to torture, gang-rape and forced sterilization at the hands of Uzbek authorities.

By Catherine Putz

October 09, 2015



Image Credit: [Flickr/sanjit](#)

The UN Human Rights Committee this week decided in favor of Mutabar Tadjibayeva, who says authorities in Uzbekistan arrested and tortured her repeatedly from 2002 to 2009, violating the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Uzbekistan acceded to the treaty in 1995.

In 2012, with the support of two prominent European human rights organizations, [Redress and FIDH](#), as well as the support of Fiery Hearts Club, a human rights organization she founded in eastern Uzbekistan, Tadjibayeva filed a [complaint](#) with the UNHRC. In a decision emailed to Redress on October 6 and shared with *The Diplomat*, the committee has determined that Uzbekistan is obligated to investigate Tadjibayeva's claims and take steps to "to prevent similar violations occurring in the future."

Tadjibayeva's allegations, while not the first leveled against Uzbekistan, are nonetheless chilling. From 2002 to 2005, Tadjibayeva was subject to harassment and arrest by police as a result of her work as a human rights activist. In 2005, as tension began to boil in Andijan in response to the trial of 23 local businessmen on terrorism charges, Tadjibayeva sent a telegram to the Uzbek President about the potential for unrest in the region. In April, she was detained by plainclothes policemen who accused her of "spreading propaganda and inciting people against the government of Uzbekistan." Tadjibayeva then was beaten, gang-raped, threatened and then released. A month later, on the same day violence broke out in Andijan she was arrested again, held for three days without access to a lawyer, and then released.

Enjoying this article? [Click here to subscribe for full access. Just \\$5 a month.](#)

In October 2005, Tadjibayeva was arrested again and charged with more than dozen crimes. After a trial—in which her lawyers were not allowed to call crucial witnesses or cross-examine prosecution witnesses—Tadjibayeva was sentenced to eight years in prison. During her time in prison, Tadjibayeva says she was repeatedly tortured, subject to more than 100 days in solitary confinement, and forcibly sterilized—her uterus was removed without her consent and she still does not have access to her own medical records.

According to her [2012 complaint](#) (also mentioned in the UNHRC summary), as a result of the torture and incarceration, "she has difficulties walking and going upstairs and is now also suffering from severe diabetes which

causes significant problems to her eyesight. She is suffering from depression, memory loss and has a feeling of anxiety because of the uncertainty and lack of understanding of the reasons for the surgery.” The UNHRC summary also notes that medical specialists determined that “she is suffering from a post-traumatic stress disorder, and that her allegations are consistent with the their findings.”

Uzbekistan was given the opportunity to respond to Tadjibayeva’s allegations and did so in 2014—but the UNHRC was unconvinced. In their decision, the committee writes that “instead of providing detailed information and explanations to the Committee in refutation, the State party accused the author of having presented ‘invented and biased’ allegations.” Put more simply: rather than providing an alternate version of events, Uzbekistan merely said Tadjibayeva was lying and that her rights had not been violated.

The committee determined that Uzbekistan violated at least 7 articles in the ICCPR.

The decision can be seen as a win for human rights organizations that have repeatedly brought up Uzbekistan’s history of violations, particularly with regard to political prisoners. In a [joint press statement](#), issued by Redress, FIDH and Fiery Hearts Club, Tadjibayeva says “I hope this decision adds to the struggle against impunity in Uzbekistan and serves to put an end to the many indignities committed against human rights defenders by its repressive regime... I call for the urgent creation of a State Commission of Inquiry to examine the grave position and ill-treatment of political prisoners in Uzbekistan. They should be immediately released. I am just one of the many victims of torture in Uzbek prisons.”

It’s unclear whether even the UNHRC’s decision and strong language will push Tashkent toward lasting change. In 2005, there was considerable international attention on Uzbekistan’s human rights abuses and a number of countries imposed sanctions and other restrictions on cooperation with the county. Yet as the years passed, sanctions were pulled back and partnerships restarted, and Uzbekistan’s human rights violations continued unabated. While diplomatic pressure has resulted in the release of a handful of political prisoners over the years, more remain imprisoned and obscure.

Note: the UNHRC’s decision is a public document but has not yet been uploaded to their website, a communications officer from Redress told me “It usually takes some time.” When that is available, The Diplomat will provide a link.

Topics

Crossroads Asia

Tags

Andijan massacre | Andijan massacre 2005 | Central Asia | Central Asia Human Rights
Uzbekistan | Uzbekistan human rights

RELATED STORIES



July 06, 2017

The Next Chapter in Uzbekistan’s Opening

Human Rights Watch and the BBC’s

LATEST BLOGS



July 21, 2018

All Politics Is Local in North Korea, Too

Domestic politics are a more natural

LATEST FEATURES



July 18, 2018

Taiwan’s Silent Forest Wars

The fight to save Taiwan’s endangered trees is opening migrant workers’ but

Human rights watch and the BBC's Uzbek service are getting access to the country again.

[Read Story](#)

Domestic politics are a more natural explanation for Pyongyang's political moves, like the recently announced amnesty.

[Read Post](#)

Does it mean enshrining migrant workers — but at the expense of the real criminals?

[Read Feature](#)

REGIONS

[Central Asia](#)

[East Asia](#)

[Oceania](#)

[South Asia](#)

[Southeast Asia](#)

TOPICS

[Blogs](#)

[Economy](#)

[Features](#)

[Magazine](#)

[Podcasts](#)

[Security](#)

[The Diplomat's Quiz](#)

[Diplomacy](#)

[Environment](#)

[Interviews](#)

[Photo Essays](#)

[Politics](#)

[Society](#)

[Videos](#)

BLOGS

[China Power](#)

[Asia Defense](#)

[The Pulse](#)

[Tokyo Report](#)

[Crossroads Asia](#)

[Pacific Money](#)

[Oceania](#)

[Flashpoints](#)

[ASEAN Beat](#)

[The Koreas](#)

[The Debate](#)

[Trans-Pacific View](#)

[Asia Life](#)