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Persecution of Human Rights Defenders in Uzbekistan
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Summary

The Uzbek government persecutes human rights defenders and obstructs human rights work, in violation of its international commitments.¹ In the past twelve months alone, it has imprisoned six human rights defenders and harassed numerous others.

Government persecution of human rights advocates is not new to Uzbekistan. In its March 2000 report on Uzbekistan, Human Rights Watch documented a crackdown on human rights defenders unleashed by the government following the February 1999 bombings of several government buildings in the capital, Tashkent. The report focused specific concern on Makhbuba Kasymova and Ismail Adylov, leading activists from the Independent Human Rights Organization of Uzbekistan (IHROU) who were in prison at that time as a result of the crackdown.²

The international community subsequently demanded that the Uzbek government end its persecution of human rights defenders and recognize the legitimacy of human rights organizations in Uzbekistan. International pressure yielded limited cooperation from the Uzbek government. Demarches by various countries and the conditioning of certain types of U.S. assistance to Uzbekistan brought about the release of Kasymova and Adylov, under presidential decrees issued in December 2000 and July 2001, respectively.³ The Ministry of Justice registered IHROU in March 2002, the first time it had ever registered an independent,

¹ Human rights work is protected under articles 19 and 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which protect the rights, respectively, to freedom of expression and association. The preambles to both the ICCPR and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) recognize not just the right but the duty of individuals to act as guardians of the rights provided under international law. The preambles set out that the states parties agree to the covenants' provisions, "realizing that the individual, having duties to other individuals and to the community to which he belongs, is under a responsibility to strive for the promotion and observance of the rights recognized in the present Covenant." Uzbekistan ratified the ICCPR and the ICESCR in 1995. In addition, the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by the U.N. General Assembly on December 9, 1998, sets the standards by which the international community assesses states' treatment of rights defenders. Article 1 of this instrument states that, "Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels," while article 12 (1) elaborates: "Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to participate in peaceful activities against violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms." Article 5 guarantees the right to assembly and to join and participate in nongovernmental organizations, associations, or groups for the purpose of promoting and protecting human rights. Article 6 guarantees the right, "...freely to publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and knowledge on all human rights and fundamental freedoms." See, General Assembly Resolution 53/144, A/RES/53/144, March 8, 1999.

² Human Rights Watch, "Leaving No Witnesses: Uzbekistan's Campaign against Human Rights Defenders," A *Human Rights Watch Report*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (D), March 2000.

³ Just three days after Adylov's release from prison, on July 7, 2001, the corpse of Shovrik Ruzimuradov, an activist from the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan (HRSU), was returned to his family. He died while in police custody. See Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2002: Events of 2001* (New York: 2002), p. 375. Ruzimuradov had been held incommunicado in an undisclosed location for twenty-one days after his arrest. Uzbek law enforcement officials repeatedly blocked his family's attempts to locate him in custody; HRSU reported that he died in the basement of the Ministry of Internal Affairs building. Adding to suspicion surrounding the activist's death, police blocked all entry within one kilometer of the Ruzimuradov home in the southwestern province of Kashkadaria, and turned away fellow rights defenders who traveled from Tashkent to view the body and take part in funeral services. Activists reported that police threatened to arrest them and "tear [them] to pieces" if they investigated the case further. See, "Uzbek Activist Dies in Custody," Human Rights Watch press release, July 10, 2001, available at <http://www.hrw.org/press/2001/07/uzbek0710.htm>

nongovernmental domestic human rights organization.⁴ On March 19, 2003, after a year of sustained international pressure, the authorities registered a second group, Ezgulik (Good Deed), after rejecting the group's applications three times.

Some in the international community greeted these registrations as an indication of a change in government policy.⁵ But developments throughout the last year suggest that registrations do not amount to a genuine shift in the government's policy toward independent human rights work. In the year since IHROU's registration, six human rights defenders were arrested, and one was forcibly detained in a psychiatric hospital. Others were temporarily detained, beaten, deported, and threatened.

Independent human rights defenders in Uzbekistan provide important information about the government's poor human rights record on issues ranging from censorship to torture. Their work is especially vital because the Uzbek government has silenced internal opposition, and informally censors the media. Human Rights Watch urges the Uzbek government to cease the illegal arrest, physical mistreatment, and harassment of human rights defenders that impedes the work of these activists. We urge the government to lift restrictions on the operation of civil society groups, and allow for the registration of those groups not yet registered.⁶ Human Rights Watch further calls on the international community to make an improved climate for human rights work an essential element in relations with the Uzbek government.

Arrests

Yuldash Rasulov

In 2000, Yuldash Rasulov, a resident of Karshi—a city south of Tashkent—joined his local branch of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan (HRSU), focusing his efforts on the government campaign to arrest independent Muslims.⁷

On May 24, 2002, police arrested Rasulov in Karshi and held him incommunicado in the basement of the headquarters of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Tashkent for approximately one month. Human Rights Watch later received a statement from Rasulov saying that during this time he had been beaten and abused and that he had signed self-incriminating statements because he feared sharing the fate of Shovrik Ruzimuradov, a Karshi HRSU colleague who died in custody in 2001.⁸

⁴ IHROU had periodically sought registration since its founding in 1997.

⁵ The registration of IHROU was a contributing factor in allowing the U.S. to release U.S. \$45 million in assistance to Uzbekistan, which had been conditioned on Uzbekistan showing "substantial and continuing progress" in the sphere of human rights and democracy, as required under legislation enacted by the U.S. Congress in July 2002. See "Uzbekistan: U.S. Rubber Stamps Human Rights," Human Rights Watch press release, September 10, 2002, available at: <http://hrw.org/press/2002/09/uzbek0909.htm>

⁶ At least two groups, the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan and Mothers Against the Death Penalty and Torture, have applied for registration but were rejected; other organizations have not applied because they believe that they will be rejected

⁷ The government closely controls Islam in Uzbekistan. The Uzbek government is in its fifth year of a campaign to arrest and imprison people whose Islamic beliefs, affiliations, and religious practices do not fall within parameters deemed acceptable by the government. In the course of its campaign, the government has arrested and sentenced thousands to lengthy prison terms on charges related to "religious extremism."

⁸ See above, footnote 3. Statement from Yuldash Rasulov to Human Rights Watch, dated June 5, 2002.

On May 27 the authorities justified the arrest by charging that Rasulov had recruited young men for “terrorist training camps abroad” and for the Taliban.⁹ Because these allegations were dropped in subsequent court proceedings, the government’s references to Rasulov’s alleged involvement in terrorism seem to have been aimed at discrediting him and his human rights activity, particularly among the diplomatic community. This strategy worked, as the international community was at first reluctant to raise his case forcefully. In court, the prosecution charged that Rasulov had spread “Wahhabist” ideas, and “secretly” watched videotapes and listened to audiotapes that criticized the government.¹⁰

At trial, held at the Yunusobod District Court, the evidence presented against Rasulov showed only that he prayed five times a day and had listened to tapes on Islam commonly available in the mid-1990s. Rasulov retracted his self-incriminating statements, saying that he had been pressured to sign them.¹¹ Two prosecution witnesses retracted signed statements that Rasulov had taught them Islam.

On September 17, 2002, the court convicted Rasulov of attempting to overthrow the constitutional order (article 159 of the criminal code) and distributing “extremist” literature (article 244-1 and 244-2),¹² and sentenced him to seven years in prison. After significant international pressure,¹³ Rasulov was freed on January 3, 2003, under a 2002 presidential amnesty for certain categories of prisoners sentenced to fewer than ten years.

Elena Urlaeva

On August 27, 2002, Elena Urlaeva, also a member of HRSU, was arrested outside the Ministry of Justice building in Tashkent, along with seven other participants in a protest against government rights abuses.¹⁴ Police held Urlaeva and another woman, Larissa Vdovina, in the Mirza Ulugbek district police station until the next day.¹⁵ The two were then transferred to locked wards in the main psychiatric hospital in Tashkent.

This was the second time that the authorities had placed Urlaeva in psychiatric detention in what appeared to be an attempt to stop her human rights work. In 2001, Urlaeva had been forcibly

⁹ Remarks made by Iliya Piagi, of the Department for the Fight against Organized Crime, Corruption, and Terrorism of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, to Human Rights Watch and others gathered at the Ministry of Internal Affairs to protest Rasulov’s arrest, Tashkent, May 27, 2002. A similar claim was made in a letter dated July 25, 2002, from A.O. Sharafutdinov, chief of Main Directorate for Investigation of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to Human Rights Watch; the letter is on file with Human Rights Watch.

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch unofficial transcript of the court proceedings, Yunusobod court, presided over by Judge Tolib Obidov, September 17, 2002. In Central Asia “Wahhabism” is a pejorative term for Islamic religious observance that falls beyond strict state controls, and is meant to imply “Islamic fundamentalism.” Those accused of “Wahhabism” generally have no links to the Wahhabi branch of Sunni Islam.

¹¹ According to Judge Obidov, these statements were contained in a four-page confession to accusations made by the prosecutor, including allegations that he accepted money from a member of Hizb ut-Tahrir, an Islamic organization that calls for the peaceful establishment of a Caliphate (an Islamic state).

¹² Human Rights Watch monitored the trial. See, “Human Rights Defender Sentenced to Imprisonment,” Human Rights Watch press release, September 18, 2002, available at www.hrw.org/press/2002/09/uzbek0918.htm

¹³ For example, the U.S. and German embassies raised the case of Rasulov. There was also international press coverage of the case.

¹⁴ The protest raised issues such as police abuse, lack of a fair justice system, and discrimination.

¹⁵ Urlaeva had been working on Larissa Vdovina’s complaints of abuse.

placed in psychiatric detention for more than two months. After her release, despite numerous warnings from state authorities, she continued her work in defense of victims of human rights abuse, including encouraging them to engage in public protest. On June 5, 2002, a Tashkent court ruled that Urlaeva should again be subjected to forced psychiatric detention, but the police had not executed this order prior to Urlaeva's August 27 arrest.

During Urlaeva's second psychiatric detention, hospital staff daily gave her drugs against her will in the form of injections and tablets. When the hospital released her on December 30, 2002, she was suffering from headaches, sleeplessness, internal pains, limited hand mobility, and loosened teeth.¹⁶

After her release, the authorities filed suit with the Mirabad District Court in Tashkent to declare Urlaeva legally "incompetent," meaning that she would be unable to make legal decisions in her own right and that the local authorities would appoint a guardian for her. Her lawyer requested a copy of the medical reports that the court would rely on for its decision but the hospital refused to give him access to the documents, referring to instructions from the Ministry of Health.¹⁷ Two hearings held in January were closed to the public. The state's case against Urlaeva was still pending at the time of this writing.

Jura Muradov, Musulmankul Khamraev, and Norpulat Rajapov

Jura Muradov, Musulmankul Khamraev, and Norpulat Rajapov created the Nishon branch of the HRSU in May 2002 after pursuing complaints with Uzbek government and international bodies about corruption in their local collective farm. Muradov became chairman of the branch, located in Kashkadaria, south of Tashkent.

In 2002, the three men were charged with "hooliganism" and "damage to property." The state alleged that the three men had gone to the office of the head of the local collective farm, where they shouted at him, insulted and threatened him, broke a table, tore his shirt and knocked his hat off his head.¹⁸ The three were not taken into custody. The head of HRSU dismissed the allegations as spurious and said that the charges were pursued against them in retribution for making complaints about local corruption and for founding a local branch of the HRSU.¹⁹

Court proceedings began in June. All three men denied the allegations against them. Six of the eight prosecution witnesses who testified used identical language to describe the events, which suggested improper prosecutorial interference. Another prosecution witness supported the defendants' version, throwing doubt on the prosecution's case.²⁰ The proceeding was then postponed indefinitely, raising the possibility that the matter would be dropped.

¹⁶ Statement to Human Rights Watch from Elena Urlaeva, dated January 8, 2003, on file in Human Rights Watch.

¹⁷ The court also did not hand over these documents to the lawyer. Human Rights Watch interview with Urlaeva's lawyer, January 29, 2003. Letter from the Clinical Psychiatric Hospital, Tashkent to Urlaeva's lawyer, dated January 22, 2003, on file in Human Rights Watch. The instructions quoted in the letter state that access is prohibited to all except investigating and inquiring authorities, prosecution bodies, and judges.

¹⁸ Verdict of the Nishon Regional Court, presided over by Judge G. Azizov, September 16, 2002.

¹⁹ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Tolib Yakubov, chair of the HRSU, Tashkent, March 25, 2003.

²⁰ Verdict of the Nishon Regional Court, presided over by Judge G. Azizov, September 16, 2002.

However, the police arrested the three men without warning on September 16, 2002, and brought them before a judge, who issued a verdict that day—with no lawyer present—sentencing all three to prison sentences ranging from five and a half to six years in prison on the same charges. They were immediately taken into custody.²¹ An appeals court reduced each sentence by one year. The three were not released under the 2002 amnesty.

Tursunbai Utamuratov

In the months prior to his September 2002 arrest, Tursunbai Utamuratov, chair of the Karakalpakstan branch of HRSU, had sent complaints about corruption of local officials, including customs officials seeking bribes, to the prosecutor general's office. He had also been trying to clear his name from a 1997 hooliganism conviction, which he said was brought in retaliation for the role he played as whistleblower on government corruption while he was a civil servant.²²

On September 4, 2002, according to HRSU, about thirty police officers surrounded Utamuratov's house, arrested him, and searched the house. He was held in custody pending trial in November on charges relating to evading taxes on the sale of televisions. On November 30, 2002, the Khojelin District Court in Karakalpakstan sentenced Utamuratov to nine years in prison for tax evasion and related charges.

HRSU's chair, Tolib Yakubov, believes that the case was brought against him to silence his complaints about corruption of local officials and his attempts to clear his name.²³

Utamuratov appealed on January 8, 2003, and the sentence was reduced to four years.

Jakhangir Shosalimov

In September 2002, new and deeply unpopular economic reforms went into effect, resulting in the closure of many of the open market bazaars throughout the country. Several demonstrations—some of them peaceful, some involving violence—broke out in the markets in protest against the new measures, resulting in an increased police presence in the markets. Witnesses told Human Rights Watch that on September 4, Jakhangir Shosalimov, a member of IHROU had escorted a journalist to interview a man in Tashkent's Chorsu market. The man said that police had beaten him and his pregnant wife earlier that day for no reason until she lost consciousness, and that a crowd at the market, angry and resentful at the police behavior, had intervened, throwing stones at the police and the police car.²⁴

After Shosalimov left the journalist, police arrested him at the market. The Shaikhantaur District Court sentenced him the same day to fifteen days of detention for "breaching public order." In an attempt to justify the arrest, the deputy head of the Tashkent Municipal Police reportedly told a journalist that Shosalimov had organized a riot earlier in the day at the Chorsu market.²⁵

²¹ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Tolib Yakubov, chair of HRSU, Tashkent, March 25, 2003.

²² Article 227 of the Criminal Code of Uzbekistan in 1996. Written statement from Judge A. Turgunov of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Uzbekistan, dated August 21, 1997.

²³ Human Rights Watch interviews with Tolib Yakubov, Tashkent, September 5, 2002, and October 3, 2002.

²⁴ "Uzbek Rights Defenders Detained," Human Rights Watch press release, September 11, 2002, available at: <http://hrw.org/press/2002/09/uzbek091102.htm>

²⁵ Human Rights Watch interview with journalist who asked not to be named, Tashkent, September 5, 2002.

Harrassment, Intimidation, and Other Interference

The authorities have harassed and threatened other human rights defenders in a variety of instances. Brief examples follow:

In 2002, police regularly visited the home of Abdusalom Ergashev, a rights defender in Fergana City, and on several occasions summoned him to the police station. On one occasion they questioned him about his activities, and on another occasion he refused to appear, as police did not produce a warrant.²⁶ Three unknown persons stole Ergashev's driver's license and car registration papers just before he intended to bring a group of human rights advocates to Tashkent on November 16, 2002. This prevented him from making the trip. While it is impossible to identify the burglars, the timing of the incident, the rapidity with which they acted—Ergashev had left his vehicle for only a few minutes—and the fact that no other items were stolen suggest authorities' involvement.

On January 18, 2003, Uzbek authorities deported Nikolai Mitrokhin, a researcher with the Moscow-based human rights organization Memorial. The Uzbek Border Guard Service refused to explain why he was being deported, and referred only to "an order from above." When he attempted again to enter the country on January 22, he was denied entry. A Russian citizen, Mitrokhin did not need a visa to enter the country. Memorial believes he was deported because of an article he had published in November 2002 about torture in Uzbekistan, based on research conducted on a field mission.²⁷

Police detained rights defender Olga Krasnova, who was actively advocating on behalf of Elena Urlaeva after her incarceration in a psychiatric hospital (see above), on January 10, 2003, the day she was to meet with Lorne Craner, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. Her detention prevented her from raising Urlaeva's case with Craner. She was released in the afternoon, after the scheduled meeting. On August 27, 2002, the day that Urlaeva was arrested, Krasnova was also detained at the same protest; local authorities beat her on the arms, back, and legs while she was in police custody.²⁸

Mutabar Tajibaeva, an independent rights activist from Fergana, who was head of a local women's organization, announced that she would hold a protest regarding rights issues outside the national parliament in Tashkent on Constitution Day, December 8, 2002. On December 4, she received a letter from the prosecutor's office in Fergana, stating that her organization was unregistered and that she could be prosecuted for her activities.²⁹ On December 6, she was called to court to face a misdemeanor charge of "breaching the public order," because of a human rights protest she had helped to organize in October in Fergana, which drew about ten people. She refused to appear for the hearing, and went into hiding for several days, fearing

²⁶ Human Rights Watch telephone interviews with Abdusalom Ergashev, October 18, 2002, November 20, 2002 and November 21, 2002.

²⁷ "Uzbekistan/Russia: Uzbek Authorities Declare that Russian Human Rights Defender Deported," Memorial Human Rights Center press release, January 22, 2003.

²⁸ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Olga Krasnova, August 27, 2002; Human Rights Watch interview with Olga Krasnova, August 29, 2002.

²⁹ Letter to Mutabar Tajibaeva from the Fergana City Prosecutor's Office, dated December 4, 2002. On file with Human Rights Watch.

arrest. According to Tajibaeva, police searched for her in numerous homes in the village where she had been staying, and threatened her neighbors and friends with violence and imprisonment.³⁰ Some days later, however, Tajibaeva came out of hiding and was given a date to appear in court. She was not taken into custody. At the time of writing the prosecutor had protested a court decision to dismiss the case. The government actions were successful in derailing the December 8 protest action, which was cancelled.

Several members of the Independent Union of Journalists of Uzbekistan (IUJU), whose publications focus on human rights issues in Uzbekistan, were detained and threatened by law enforcement authorities. On October 21, 2002, officers of the National Security Service forcefully escorted Azamat Mamankulov, a member of IUJU, out of an internet café, hit him several times in the stomach and head, and warned him to stop working with Ruslan Sharipov, then the head of the IUJU.³¹ On February 22, police detained Oleg Sarapulov, also a member of IUJU, and questioned him about internet articles in his possession that were critical of the Uzbek government. He was released after two days. He told Human Rights Watch that the police planted on him leaflets belonging to Hizb ut-Tahrir,³² and that he fears that an ongoing investigation could lead to spurious criminal charges that he is involved in anti-constitutional activities.³³

On June 14, 2002, Tashkent police threatened to charge Nigmatilla Nazaraliev, a member of IHROU, with distributing “religious extremist” material unless he stopped organizing and participating in protests against government rights abuses.³⁴ On the morning of July 2, 2002, police detained Nazaraliev while he was attending a peaceful protest. Nazaraliev told Human Rights Watch that police took him in handcuffs to the main Tashkent psychiatric hospital where they took his name, address, and other details. Police then took him to the Mirabad District Court, where Judge Yusupov warned him that his activities were illegal and not to repeat them. He was held in custody until the early evening. According to Nazaraliev, during the journey home police threatened to kill him.³⁵

Difficulties with Registration of Nongovernmental Human Rights Organizations

In Uzbekistan an unregistered organization is treated as a banned organization and criminal charges can be brought against its members.³⁶ The issue of registration is therefore of the highest importance to human rights activists. Many of the abusive actions described above were facilitated by the legal vulnerability of unregistered organizations. Independent human rights groups had been trying to register, and the international community had lobbied the government for years on this issue, with no success until March 2002. At that time, IHROU was registered

³⁰ Human Rights Watch attended a press conference held by Mutabar Tajibaeva, in the office of Freedom House in Tashkent, December 27, 2002.

³¹ Human Rights Watch interview with Ruslan Sharipov and Azamat Mamankulov, Tashkent, October 21, 2002.

³² Many people have been imprisoned in Uzbekistan for possession of such leaflets.

³³ Human Rights Watch interview with Ruslan Sharipov and Oleg Sarapulov, Tashkent, February 25, 2003.

³⁴ Human Rights Watch interview with Nigmatilla Nazaraliev, Tashkent, June 19, 2002.

³⁵ Human Rights Watch interview with Nigmatilla Nazaraliev, Tashkent, July 3, 2002.

³⁶ Article 216 of the Uzbek criminal code punishes “organizing or reactivating the activities of banned public associations and religious organizations” with a fine of up to 100 times the monthly minimum salary or up to a maximum five-year prison term. In 1999, IHROU chairman Mikhail Ardzinov was questioned in relation to Mahbuba Kosymova’s case. During his interrogation, the investigator denounced IHROU, which at the time was unregistered, as an “illegal organization.” See, Human Rights Watch, “Leaving No Witnesses,” p. 19.

just prior to a visit by President Karimov to the U.S. This gesture was perceived as an attempt to preempt criticism of the country's poor rights record by U.S. officials and media. The joint declaration signed by the United States and Uzbekistan during that visit heightened expectations that additional groups would be soon be registered.³⁷ One year later, on March 19, 2003 the Uzbek authorities registered a second human rights group, Ezgulik. However, prior to registration, Ezgulik had applied for registration three times during the year, and the Ministry of Justice had rejected the applications on each occasion on technical grounds.³⁸ The international community had raised the issue of registration of human rights groups on an on-going basis with the government.³⁹ As with the IHROU case, when the authorities registered Ezgulik, the Uzbek government was under mounting pressure to show some progress in the human rights field, this time in advance of an April meeting with the U.S. to assess bilateral relations and the annual meeting of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to be held in May in Tashkent.⁴⁰

Recommendations

To the Uzbek Government:

- Immediately release human rights defenders Jura Muradov, Musulmankul Khamraev, Norpulat Rajapov, and Tursunbai Utamuratov, pending an impartial review of the charges against them;
- Stop further targeting of human rights defenders for arrest and harassment;
- Register independent human rights organizations such as the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan, Mazlum ("The Oppressed"), the Committee of Legal Assistance to Prisoners, and Mothers Against the Death Penalty and Torture;
- Grant an invitation to visit the country to the U.N. Special Representative to the Secretary General on human rights defenders, as requested by that office.

To the International Community:

- Call on the Uzbek government to immediately release human rights defenders from jail;
- Call on the Uzbek government to register independent human rights organizations, in accordance with the law;
- Support financially and through public statements the development and continued operation of independent human rights organizations;
- Ensure that visiting officials schedule meetings with local rights defenders to demonstrate support for them and exchange information on Uzbekistan's rights record. Speak out publicly, including via Uzbek media outlets, if government authorities obstruct these meetings;

³⁷ "Declaration on the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the United States of America," signed March 12, 2002. The declaration identified strengthening nongovernmental organizations as a "priority area," on which "both sides expect to concrete progress," and called for registration procedures to be simplified.

³⁸ Human Rights Watch interview with Vasila Inoiatova, head of Ezgulik, Tashkent, March 19, 2003.

³⁹ For example, the U.S., European Union, and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe all raised the issue.

⁴⁰ For further information on the campaign to secure human rights improvements before the EBRD meeting, see <http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/uzbekistan/>.

- The EBRD and its shareholder governments should insist that jailed rights defenders are released prior to the Bank's annual meeting, scheduled to take place in Tashkent in May 2003, and ensure that civil society representatives have full access to the meeting and enjoy protection if they speak out about problems related to governance, democracy, and human rights in Uzbekistan.