“Until the Very End”
Politically Motivated Imprisonment in Uzbekistan
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This brochure contains extracts from the 121-page report of the same name, published in September 2014.
Agents of Uzbekistan’s feared National Security Services, the “SNB,” kidnapped Muhammad Bekjanov from his apartment in Kiev, Ukraine in 1999. A prominent member of the peaceful political opposition party Erk (Freedom) and editor of one of Uzbekistan’s leading independent newspapers, Bekjanov had fled Tashkent two years earlier in response to a wide-ranging crackdown on Uzbekistan’s political opposition led by the country’s authoritarian president, Islam Karimov. Forcibly returned to Uzbekistan without a hearing, Bekjanov was tried in a closed courtroom amidst allegations that Uzbek authorities had subjected him to electric shocks, beatings with batons, and temporary suffocation. A Tashkent court sentenced him to thirteen years on various charges, including for “threatening the constitutional order.”

A Tashkent court sentenced him to thirteen years on various charges, including for “threatening the constitutional order.”

Kasan prison colony 64/51 in the southern province of Kashkadarya. In 2013, the International Committee of the Red Cross announced it would stop monitoring places of detention in Uzbekistan, citing authorities’ interference with its standard working procedures.

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At the end of January 2012, just days before Bekjanov’s prison sentence was set to expire, he was given an additional five-year sentence for alleged and unspecified “violations of prison rules.” Along with another jailed Uzbek journalist and opposition activist, Bekjanov has been imprisoned longer than any other reporter in the world. Bekjanov’s alleged crime, like so many other individuals imprisoned on politically motivated charges in Uzbekistan, was his peaceful exercise of fundamental rights, including freedom of speech, association, and assembly. Like other such prisoners, there is no evidence that he has ever committed any act of violence.

Bekjanov is just one of thousands of actual or perceived government opponents and critics the Uzbek government has imprisoned on politically motivated charges to enforce its repressive rule since the early 1990s. The victims span broad categories, including human rights activists, journalists, political opposition activists, religious leaders and believers, cultural figures, artists, entrepreneurs, and others, imprisoned for no other reason than their peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression and the government’s identification of them as “enemies of the state.”

Based on more than 150 in-depth interviews with the relatives of such prisoners, their lawyers, human rights activists, scholars, and former Uzbek government officials, this report examines the cases of 34 of Uzbekistan’s most prominent individuals imprisoned on politically motivated charges. The interviewees also included individuals previously imprisoned on such charges. Human Rights Watch documents the egregious abuses they face in custody and calls on the Uzbek government for their immediate and unconditional release.

Fifteen of those whose cases this report documents are rights activists: Azam Farmonov, Mehriniso Hamdamova, Zulhumor Hamdamova, Isroiljon Kholdorov, Nosim Isakov, Gaybullo Jalliov, Nusratdin Jumaniyazov, Matluba Kamilova, Ganikhon Mammatkhanov, Chuyan Mamatkulov, Zafarjon Rahimov, Yuldash Rasulov, Bobomurod Razzokov, Fahriddin Tillaev, and Akzam Turgunov. Five are journalists: Solijon Abdurakhmanov, Muhammad Bekjanov, Gayrat Mikhliboev, Yusuf Ruzimuradov, and Dilmurod Saidov. Four are opposition activists: Murod Juraev, Samandar Kukanov, Kudratbek Rasulov, and Rustam Usmanov. Three are independent religious figures: Ruhiddin Fahriddinov, Hayrullo Hamidov, and Akram Yuldashev. Seven others are various perceived critics of the government or witnesses to the May 13, 2005 Andijan massacre, when Uzbek government forces shot and killed hundreds of mainly peaceful protesters: Dilorom Abdukadirova, Botirbek Eshkuziev, Bahrom Ibragimov, Davron Kobilov, Erkin Musaev, Davron Tojiev, and Ravshanbek Valiev.
The cases here do not constitute an exhaustive list of all persons convicted on politically motivated charges in Uzbekistan, nor is their selection meant to privilege some cases over others. Instead, these 34 prisoners, who come from every region of the country, shed light on larger trends of political repression in Uzbekistan and on the government’s attempt to suppress a wide range of independent activity that occurs beyond strict state control. At the same time, many cases illustrate the remarkable talent, creativity, and contributions of Uzbekistan’s independent civil society to the country’s civic development, as well as the immense loss that is caused by their continuing imprisonment.

Human Rights Watch research demonstrates that individuals imprisoned on politically motivated charges experience a wide range of human rights abuses. Of the 34 prisoners whose cases this report documents:

- At least 29 have made credible allegations of torture or ill-treatment during their pretrial custody or in prison;
- At least 18 have been denied access to counsel at critical stages of the investigation or trial, including following conviction when additional prison terms have been added to their original sentences;
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In at least one case, authorities have forcibly disappeared a prisoner, failing to reveal the whereabouts or condition of the prisoner for such a lengthy period of time that it is unclear whether the person is dead or alive.

This report presents an individual profile of each of the 34 individuals currently imprisoned on politically motivated charges. It highlights the most up-to-date information available on the nature of their work prior to imprisonment, the charges brought against them, reports of torture or ill-treatment in pretrial custody and after conviction, their current whereabouts, and the state of their health.

The abuses suffered by those imprisoned on politically motivated charges in Uzbekistan include denial of access to counsel, incommunicado detention, pretrial and post-conviction torture, solitary confinement, the denial of appropriate medical care, and the arbitrary denial of amnesty and extension of prison sentences. These are all serious violations of Uzbekistan’s domestic and international human rights obligations.

Information gathered by Human Rights Watch shows that in many cases the conditions in which persons imprisoned on politically motivated charges are held—overcrowded cells, poor quality and insufficient food and water, and inadequate medical treatment—do not meet international prison standards. Authorities have routinely denied these prisoners treatment for serious medical problems, many of which emerged over the course of prolonged imprisonment. Authorities neither monitor nor remedy the poor prison conditions that may have caused and then exacerbated such health problems in violation of Uzbekistan’s core international human rights obligations. Failure to provide adequate health care or medical treatment to a detainee in prison may contribute to conditions amounting to inhumane or degrading treatment.

Human Rights Watch research indicates that prison officials have wide discretion over who to release under amnesty and sometimes receive instructions from government officials to find justifications to keep persons imprisoned on politically motivated charges incarcerated despite their ostensible eligibility for amnesty.
We also found that prison authorities regularly extend the sentences of those imprisoned on politically motivated charges for so-called “violations of prison rules.” Of 34 current prisoners and 10 former prisoners profiled in this report, at least 14 have had their sentences arbitrarily extended in prison, many more than once—four times in the case of political opposition figure Murom Jurayev—often in proceedings that without due process acknowledge and therefore endorse the courts’ unlawful actions. Uzbekistan’s Criminal Code creates the offense of “disobedience to legitimate orders of administration of institution of execution of penalty” (article 222), often referred to as “violations of prison rules,” on which authorities base the extensions of prisoners’ sentences. However, while the general regulations on the administration of prisons, issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, set out a range of behaviors that can be considered “violations” in the context of a prison, the court’s discretion is extensive in its interpretation of the regulations. The court can declare that “there are no political prisoners in Uzbekistan.”

Refusing to acknowledge the existence of even a single wrongfully imprisoned individual, Saidov instead pounded his fists on the table, defiantly dismissing the recommendations as based on “misinformation and lies” designed by “politically motivated” NGOs solely to tarnish Uzbekistan’s reputation. Despite the Uzbek government’s resistance to acknowledge the problem, international pressure can be extremely effective in securing the release of persons imprisoned on politically motivated charges. The findings of this report should remind Uzbekistan’s international partners, including members of the UN Human Rights Council, the US and the EU, and other concerned governments, regional bodies, and international financial institutions of the urgent need to focus on the crisis of politically motivated imprisonment in Uzbekistan and to redouble efforts to secure these and other wrongfully detained individuals’ immediate and unconditional release.

Human Rights Watch strongly believes that the Uzbek government’s continued refusal to release wrongfully imprisoned individuals and lack of any meaningful progress on human rights for more than a decade should trigger in key capitals such as Washington, Brussels, Berlin, and London and at the UN Human Rights Council an assessment of their current strategies for pursuing improvements in Uzbekistan. Given president Islam Karimov’s long record of defying calls to implement meaningful reform, years after Western governments had eased sanctions on the country as a way to encourage reform, Uzbekistan’s international partners should convene a clear and public and in private, about the urgent need for measurable, concrete steps, including the release of all those imprisoned on politically motivated charges, in addition to steps to address other serious human rights violations. They should also publicly acknowledge Tashkent’s systematic retribution on rights and be ready to follow through with meaningful policy consequences, some which Human Rights Watch outlines below, should the Uzbek government continue to commit widespread human rights abuses.

Without a fundamental shift in approach in Tashkent and with absent sustained, robust, and public international pressure, the atrocious situation in Uzbekistan will continue and the suffering of Muhammad Bekjonov, Imrul Gulyamov, Murom Jurayev, Samandar Kukanov, Dilxorm Abdukodirov, their families, the others profiled in this report, and countless others, is sure to get worse.

A guard in a solitary confinement block at an unidentified prison in Uzbekistan. Date unknown. © Fiyi Hearts Club

The human rights record of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was forced to end its visits to detainees and prisoners in April 2013 due to Uzbek government interference in its standard operating procedures. Detainees’ incarceration conditions include beatings and torture, solitary confinement, sexual humiliation, exposure to harsh climatic conditions, tuberculosis, and other infectious diseases that cause psychological and physical damage to inmates. Despite the commitments Uzbekistan has made relating to the protection of human rights, including the freedoms of expression, assembly, association, and religion guaranteed in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the prohibition on torture enshrined in the Convention against Torture, it has faced virtually no consequences for its persistent refusal to acknowledge the existence of any individuals imprisoned on politically motivated charges, release them from prison, improve their treatment in custody, or end the cycle of crackdown, arrests, and convictions. Nor has the government paid any real cost for its systematic failure to cooperate with international institutions, including eleven special procedures of the United Nations Human Rights Council, various UN treaty bodies such as the Human Rights Committee and Committee against Torture, or the ICRC.

The governments traditionally viewed as champions of the cause of human rights in Uzbekistan—the United States, the European Union, and several EU member states—have publicly criticized Uzbekistan’s atrocity’s rights record in past years, most strongly in the immediate aftermath of the Andijan massacre by placing sanctions and restrictions on the Uzbek government. EU and US officials have raised the cases of some of the current and former prisoners described in this report; however, in the past five years they have muted their criticisms and softened their human rights policies with respect to politically motivated imprisonment. Unfortunately, the Uzbek government’s continued failure to release persons convicted on politically motivated grounds has not had a substantial impact on these international actors’ relations with Uzbekistan, on which they continue to rely for its geopolitical importance as a transit route in the context of the war in Afghanistan.

Significantly, when the Uzbek government has faced sustained external pressure, including sanctions, restrictions on military assistance, and other robust, public, specific criticism from its international partners, it has responded by taking incremental steps to improve human rights, including by releasing some individuals imprisoned on politically motivated charges on the eve of key bilateral summits or high-level visits. But in the absence of such pressure, the Uzbek government has defied international calls for human rights improvements, even denying that any problems exist.

In September 2013, for example, during the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Uzbekistan—an examination of Uzbekistan’s human rights record before the UN Human Rights Council—Akmal Saidov, head of the Uzbek delegation, ignored the chorus of recommendations from governments and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to release immediately and unconditionally Uzbekistan’s political prisoners, even declaring that “there are no political prisoners in Uzbekistan.”

In Septem ber 2013 , for exam ple, during the U niversal PER iod Revi ew (UPR) of U zbekistan—a n examinati on of U zbekistan’s human rights record before the U N Human Rights Council—Akmal Saidov, head of the U zbek delegati on, ignori ng the cho rus of recomm endati on s from governm ents and nongovernm ental organi zati ons (NGOs) to release immediately and unconditi onal ly Uzbekistan’s politi cal prisoners, even declari ng that “there are no political prisoners in Uzbekistan.”
HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

Uzbekistan’s rights activists face the constant threat of severe government reprisal, including imprisonment, torture, harassment, and other forms of pressure. The government routinely interferes in the activities of both domestic and international rights groups, making it nearly impossible for them to carry out their work. This includes: preventing groups from gaining registration, making it illegal for them to accept any kind of grants or other assistance of funding; denying activists exit visas to prevent them from participating in trainings or international conferences; placing activists under surveillance; and frequently subjecting activists to beatings, arbitrary detention and house arrest. Authorities also block international rights groups, including Human Rights Watch, from operating in Uzbekistan and have aggressively pursued rights activists living in exile.

AZAM FARMONOV
BORN: 1979
ARRESTED: April 29, 2006
CHARGES: Extortion
SENTENCED: June 15, 2006; 9 years

AZAM FARMONOV has been tortured repeatedly since his arrest in 2006. He is currently held at Jaslyk prison. UN bodies and several governments have called for Jaslyk to be closed after repeated allegations of torture.
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ISROILJON KHOLDOROV
BORN: August 23, 1951
KIDNAPPED FROM KYRGYZSTAN: June 10, 2006
CHARGES: “Threatening the constitutional order,” “unlawful entry or exit into Uzbekistan,” and “preparing or distributing documents that threaten the public order”
SENTENCED: February 2007; 6 years; extended by 3 years

Following the May 2005 Andijan massacre, ISROILJON KHOLDOROV spoke to international media about mass graves in Andijan. Uzbek authorities later kidnapped him in 2006 from neighboring Kyrgyzstan, where he had fled for safety, brought him back to Uzbekistan, and imprisoned him. He is serving a 9-year sentence but his relatives fear his sentence could be further extended.
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GAYBULLO JALILOV
BORN: August 24, 1964
ARRESTED: June 8, 2009
CHARGES: “anti-constitutional activity” and “membership in a banned religious organization.”
SENTENCED: August 4, 2010; 11 years, 1 months, 5 days

By the time of his arrest in 2009 rights activist GAYBULLO JALILOV had collected information on over 200 arrests of independent Muslims in his native province of Kashkadarya. He is currently serving an 11-year sentence in Navoi prison.
© Association for Human Rights in Central Asia

GANIKHON MAMATKHANOV
BORN: 1951
ARRESTED: October 12, 2009
CHARGES: Fraud and attempted bribery
SENTENCED: November 25, 2009; 5 years; sentence extended for an unspecified period

Authorities should have released imprisoned rights activist GANIKHON MAMATKHANOV in March 2014 but extended his sentence for unspecified “violations of prison rules” following a closed hearing.
© Abdujalil Boytayev/Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan

NURADDIN JUMANIYAZOV
BORN: October 8, 1948
ARRESTED: January 2, 2014
CHARGES: Human trafficking
SENTENCED: March 2014; 8 years, 3 months

Before his arrest and torture by authorities in 2014, NURADDIN JUMANIYAZOV headed the Tashkent chapter of the Union of Independent Trade Unions, which protects the rights of labor migrants.
© Association for Human Rights in Central Asia

CHUYAN MAMATKULOV
BORN: 1970
ARRESTED: August 2012
CHARGES: 12 different charges, including narcotics sale, extortion, kidnapping, religious extremism, and racketeering

Rights activist CHUYAN MAMATKULOV, imprisoned in Navoi, photographed here with his two children in Kashkadarya province.
© Private
Until the Very End

In 2012 Foreign Policy magazine called imprisoned activist AKZAM TURGUNOV one of the world’s “unsung heroes” for his work monitoring trials and defending the rights of vulnerable groups in Uzbekistan. Turgunov was tortured in pretrial custody and is currently serving a 10-year sentence in Karshi.

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ZAFA R JOH I M O V
BORN: 1969
ARRESTED: April 2007
CHARGES: “Threatening the constitutional order” and “membership in a banned religious organization”
SENTENCED: 2007; 6 years; Rahimov’s sentence was extended for an unspecified period.

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YULDASH RASULOV is a rights activist from Karshi currently imprisoned on charges of “threatening the constitutional order” and “membership in a banned religious organization.”
© Gobierno

FAH R I D I N  T I L L A E V
BORN: August 25, 1971
ARRESTED: January 2, 2014
CHARGES: Human trafficking
SENTENCED: March 2014; 8 years, 3 months.

© Association for Human Rights in Central Asia

BOBOMUROD RA ZZAKOV, 64, is the head of the Bukhara office of Ezgulik. He was arrested on fabricated charges of human trafficking and sentenced to four years’ imprisonment in September 2013.
© Fiery Hearts Club

FAH R I D I N  T I L L A E V has advocated for workers’ rights in southeastern Uzbekistan. He was arrested in 2014, and authorities stuck needles between his fingers and toes to force him into a false confession for human trafficking. He is serving an 8-year sentence in Navoi prison.

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MAT LUBA KAM ILOVA
BORN: 1960
ARRESTED: September 6, 2010
CHARGES: Narcotics possession
SENTENCED: 11 years

© Association for Human Rights in Central Asia

Since 2005 FAH R I D I N  T I L L A E V has advocated for workers’ rights in southeastern Uzbekistan. He was arrested in 2014, and authorities stuck needles between his fingers and toes to force him into a false confession for human trafficking. He is serving an 8-year sentence in Navoi prison.

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ZAFA R JOH I M O V defended the rights of farmers and pious Muslims prior to his 2007 arrest. He was to have been released in 2013, but authorities at his prison colony in Karavulbazar in the southern province of Bukhara, extended his sentence for an unspecified period of time.

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YULDASH RASULOV
BORN: 1968
ARRESTED: April 2007
CHARGES: “Threatening the constitutional order” and “membership in a banned religious organization”
SENTENCED: 2007; 10 years.

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BOBOMUROD RA ZZAKOV
BORN: March 19, 1953
ARRESTED: July 10, 2013
CHARGES: Human trafficking
SENTENCED: September 24, 2013; 4 years.

© Fiery Hearts Club

In 2012, BUKHARAN activist ZAFA R JOH I M O V was arrested for opposing official policies, including the persecution of Muslims and the repression of human rights. He is serving a 10-year sentence in Karshi.

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FAH R I D I N  T I L L A E V has been arrested and imprisoned for advocating for workers’ rights in southeastern Uzbekistan.
© Association for Human Rights in Central Asia

NO S I M  I S A KO V
BORN: November 12, 1966
ARRESTED: October 22, 2005
CHARGES: “Hooliganism” and extortion
SENTENCED: December 2005; 8 years; sentence extended for an unspecified period.

© Association for Human Rights in Central Asia

Since 2005 FAH R I D I N  T I L L A E V has advocated for workers’ rights in southeastern Uzbekistan. He was arrested in 2014, and authorities stuck needles between his fingers and toes to force him into a false confession for human trafficking. He is serving an 8-year sentence in Navoi prison.

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BOBOMUROD RA ZZAKOV
BORN: 1960
ARRESTED: January 1, 1952
CHARGES: Extortion
SENTENCED: October 23, 2008; 10 years.

© Association for Human Rights in Central Asia

B O B O M U R O D  R A ZZA KO V
BORN: March 19, 1953
ARRESTED: July 10, 2013
CHARGES: Human trafficking
SENTENCED: September 24, 2013; 4 years.

© Fiery Hearts Club

Since 2005 FAH R I D I N  T I L L A E V has advocated for workers’ rights in southeastern Uzbekistan. He was arrested in 2014, and authorities stuck needles between his fingers and toes to force him into a false confession for human trafficking. He is serving an 8-year sentence in Navoi prison.

© Association for Human Rights in Central Asia

ZAFA R JOH I M O V
BORN: 1969
ARRESTED: April 2007
CHARGES: “Threatening the constitutional order” and “membership in a banned religious organization”
SENTENCED: 2007; 6 years; Rahimov’s sentence was extended for an unspecified period.

© Association for Human Rights in Central Asia

YULDASH RASULOV
BORN: 1968
ARRESTED: April 2007
CHARGES: “Threatening the constitutional order” and “membership in a banned religious organization”
SENTENCED: 2007; 10 years.

© Association for Human Rights in Central Asia

MAT LUBA KAM ILOVA
BORN: 1960
ARRESTED: September 6, 2010
CHARGES: Narcotics possession
SENTENCED: 11 years

© Association for Human Rights in Central Asia

Since 2005 FAH R I D I N  T I L L A E V has advocated for workers’ rights in southeastern Uzbekistan. He was arrested in 2014, and authorities stuck needles between his fingers and toes to force him into a false confession for human trafficking. He is serving an 8-year sentence in Navoi prison.

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SENTENCED: 2007; 10 years.

© Association for Human Rights in Central Asia

BOBOMUROD RA ZZAKOV
BORN: March 19, 1953
ARRESTED: July 10, 2013
CHARGES: Human trafficking
SENTENCED: September 24, 2013; 4 years.

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BORN: 1968
ARRESTED: April 2007
CHARGES: “Threatening the constitutional order” and “membership in a banned religious organization”
SENTENCED: 2007; 10 years.

© Association for Human Rights in Central Asia
Despite legislation ostensibly protecting freedom of speech, in practice, censorship is the norm and freedom of expression in Uzbekistan is severely limited. Foreign correspondents and Uzbek citizens working for independent or foreign media are not allowed to operate without accreditation, which since the Andijan massacre in 2005, has been impossible to obtain in practice. The few independent journalists who continue to work in the country do so at great risk and are forced to self-censor due to harassment, detention, and threats of imprisonment for their work. Uzbek websites providing critical information are blocked, including Ferganavisnews.com, Uznews.net, and Muslimuzbekistan.org. News agencies such as the New York Times, the BBC, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Voice of America, and Deutsche Welle are unable or forbidden to operate in Uzbekistan. Websites of international human rights organizations like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International are blocked.

**JOURNALISTS**

Imprisoned since 2010, authorities repeatedly hid journalist **SOLJON ABDURAKHMANOV** from representatives of the International Committee for the Red Cross when they tried to visit him in Karshi prison.

© Uznews.net

**RUSTAM USMANOV**

**BORN:** 1946  
**ARRESTED:** June 1992  
**CHARGES:** Economic crimes linked to alleged financing of the Eraki opposition party  
**SENTENCED:** May 1993; 20 years; sentence extended for 5 years

**SAMANDAR KUKANOV**

**BORN:** 1945  
**ARRESTED:** June 1992  
**CHARGES:** Various, including “high treason,” “conspiracy with a purpose of seizure of power,” and “calls for violent overthrow of constitutional order or forcible violation of the unity of the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan”  
**SENTENCED:** May 31, 1995; 12 years; sentence extended on four occasions

In the 23 years since Uzbekistan gained independence from the Soviet Union, there has not been a single election deemed even remotely “free and fair” by international monitoring bodies. President Karimov, who in 2014 entered his twenty-fifth year of consecutive rule, uses the dominant executive branch to repress all political opposition. No opposition parties are allowed to participate in the political process. Karimov’s political opponents have either been forced to flee the country or are in prison. The government has aggressively jailed and extended the prison terms of opposition activists, some for over 20 years, making them some of the world’s longest serving political prisoners.

**POLITICAL OPPOSITION ACTIVISTS**

A native of Uzbekistan’s Fergana valley, opposition activist **KUDRATBEB RASULOV** was sentenced to 8 years in prison in 2013 for allegedly corresponding over Skype with opposition activists based in Europe.

A native of Uzbekistan’s Fergana valley, opposition activist **KUDRATBEB RASULOV** was sentenced to 8 years in prison in 2013 for allegedly corresponding over Skype with opposition activists based in Europe.

Opposition politician **MUROD JURAEV** was arrested in 1994. Authorities have extended his sentence four times for so-called “violations of prison rules,” including “peeling carrots incorrectly.”

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**SOLJON ABDURAKHMANOV**

**BORN:** May 28, 1952  
**ARRESTED:** June 2, 2008  
**CHARGES:** Narcotics possession  
**SENTENCED:** October 10, 2008; 10 years

**DILMUROD SAIDOV**

**BORN:** April 25, 1963  
**ARRESTED:** February 22, 2009  
**CHARGES:** Extortion and counterfeiting documents  
**SENTENCED:** July 30, 2009; 12½ years

**DILMUROD SAIDOV** is an investigative journalist known for his muckraking reports on corruption. Saidov suffers from tuberculosis and is imprisoned near Karshi. His brother, Obid, told Human Rights Watch that his brother “is no longer living, but merely existing.”

© Ferganavisnews.com

**GAYRAT MIKHIBLOEV**

**BORN:** September 27, 1979  
**ARRESTED:** July 24, 2002  
**CHARGES:** Extortion, unlawful transactions of foreign currency, and public order with foreign financial support  
**SENTENCED:** December 23, 2003; 8 years

**MAHMAD BEKJANOV** and **YUSUF RZIMURADOV** respectively  
**SENTENCED:** March 15, 1999; 15 years; sentences extended for an unspecified period

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, **MAHMAD BEKJANOV**—seen above in his Kiev apartment, circa 1998—along with imprisoned journalist **YUSUF RZIMURADOV** (no photo), is the world’s longest imprisoned journalist, unlawfully held in Uzbekistan since 1999.

© Private

**MUHAMMAD BEKJANOV** and **YUSUF RZIMURADOV**

**BORN:** October, 1954 and 1958, respectively  
**KIDNAPPED FROM UKRAINE:** March 1999  
**CHARGES:** Various, including “treason,” “organization of banned groups and religious organizations”  
**SENTENCED:** March 15, 1999; 15 years; sentences extended for an unspecified period

**KUDRATBEB RASULOV**

**BORN:** 1970  
**ARRESTED:** September 6, 2013  
**CHARGES:** “Threatening the constitutional order” and “production and dissemination of materials that contain threat to public safety and public order with foreign financial support”  
**SENTENCED:** December 23, 2013; 8 years

**MUROD JURAEV**

**BORN:** September 5, 1972  
**KIDNAPPED FROM KAZAKHSTAN:** September 18, 1994  
**CHARGES:** Various, including “high treason,” “conspiracy with a purpose of seizure of power,” and “calls for violent overthrow of constitutional order or forcible violation of the unity of the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan”  
**SENTENCED:** May 31, 1995; 12 years; sentence extended on four occasions

**YUSUF RZIMURADOV**

**BORN:** circa 1958—along with imprisoned journalist **YUSUF RZIMURADOV** (no photo), is the world’s longest imprisoned journalist, unlawfully held in Uzbekistan since 1999.

© Private

“Until the Very End”
INDEPENDENT RELIGIOUS FIGURES

The most numerically significant category of politically motivated arrests and convictions in Uzbekistan is among the country’s independent Muslims; that is, those who practice their faith outside strict state controls or who belong to unregistered religious organizations. The government continues to wage an unrelenting, multi-year campaign of arbitrary detention, ill-treatment, and torture against them. Since 1999, thousands of independent Muslims have been incarcerated for nonviolent offenses.

HAYRULLO HAMIDOV
BORN: December 7, 1975
ARRESTED: January 23, 2010
CHARGES: “Membership in a banned religious-extremist organization” and “possession of materials containing ideas of religious extremism and threatening to public safety”
SENTENCED: May 2010; 6 years

Authorities have repeatedly tortured imprisoned religious leader RUHIDDIN FAHRIDDINOVD since kidnapping him in Kazakhstan in 2005 and forcibly returning him to Uzbekistan on extremism charges. © Association for Human Rights in Central Asia

AKRAM YULDASHEV
BORN: July 25, 1963
ARRESTED: February 12, 1999
CHARGES: Various, including “terrorism,” “organization of banned civil groups and religious organizations,” “membership in a banned religious-extremist organization,” and “possession of materials containing ideas of religious extremism and threatening to public safety”
SENTENCED: March 1999; 17 years

A screenshot of imprisoned spiritual leader AKRAM YULDASHEV allegedly confessing on Uzbekistan’s state-controlled television to organizing the May 2005 protests in Andijan. His family has not heard from or seen him for three years. © 2005 BBC

RUHIDDIN FAHRIDDINOVD
BORN: 1967
KIDNAPPED FROM KAZAKHSTAN: November 74, 2005
CHARGES: 22 charges, among them terrorism, sabotage, organization of illegal religious groups, activity against the constitution, and the dissemination of materials that threaten state security
SENTENCED: September 15, 2007; 27 years

Andijan and other “internal enemies”

Since the Andijan massacre the government has aggressively pursued, detained, tortured, and prosecuted anyone believed to have either participated in or witnessed the events. The government has also taken steps to suppress and manipulate the truth about the massacre. Between September 2005 and July 2006, in 22 flawed and closed trials, courts convicted and sentenced at least 303 people to lengthy prison terms on various charges of extremism. Nearly all of these people, many of whom allege that they have been or continue to suffer torture in detention, remain in prison. The government also continues to aggressively pursue the return of individuals who fled the country following the atrocity. In some cases, it has sought to lure people back by providing assurances that no harm will come to them. In several cases where refugees agreed to return, including in the case of Dilorom Abdukодирова, those assurances proved false.

DILOROM ABDUKODIROVA
BORN: 1966
ARRESTED: March 2010
CHARGES: “illegal border crossing and ‘threatening the constitutional order’”
SENTENCED: April 30, 2010; 10 years, 2 months; sentence extended by 8 years

An eyewitness to the Andijan massacre, Dilorom Abdukодирова fled to Kyrgyzstan, then Australia. In 2010, after returning to Uzbekistan to reunite with her husband and children, authorities arrested her at the Tashkent airport and prosecuted her on charges of “extremism.” Abdukодирова suffered ill-treatment in custody. © Private

ERKIN MUSAЕV
BORN: May 9, 1967
ARRESTED: January 31, 2006
CHARGES: Various charges, including high treason, sharing government secrets, abuse of power, and neglect of duty
SENTENCED: June 13 and 14, 2006; 16 years; sentence extended by 4 years

Erkin Musаev served in the Ministry of Defense and then the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) before being imprisoned on espionage charges in 2006. © Association for Human Rights in Central Asia

BOTTIBEK ESHKUYEV, BAHROM IBragimov, DAVRON KABILOV, DAVRON TOJIEV, and RAVSHANBEK VAFOEV
ARRESTED: June 27, 2009 (Ibraimov), August 16, 2008 (Eshkuyev, Kabilov, and Vafoev); September 27, 2008 (Tojejv)
CHARGES: Various, including “dissimating materials or information threatening to the public order” and “establishing, leading, or participation in a religious extremist, separatist, fundamentalist or other banned organization”
SENTENCED: February 26, 2009; Ibraimov and Kabilov to 12 years, Vafoev to 10 years, and Eshkuyev to 8 years; April 8, 2009; Tojejv to 8 years

“Until the Very End”
Until the Very End

In January 2008 while serving his 14- and half-year sentence at Kipchik prison, authorities placed peaceful political opposition figure Sanjar Umarov in an open-air cell, or “monkey cage,” for five days in below-freezing temperatures. © 2014 Human Rights Watch

Kayum Ortikov is a former employee of the British Embassy in Tashkent who was tortured to extract a confession of espionage for the UK. Released in 2009, he fled Uzbekistan and now lives in the US with his family. © 2012 Kayum Ortikov

Rights activist Gulnaza Yuldasheva was imprisoned in July 2012 on extortion charges after conducting an investigation into officials’ involvement in human trafficking. © 2013 Steve Swerdlow / Human Rights Watch

Farkisdikhon Mukhtarov and wife Surayo five days after his release from prison in December 2010. His release came one day after US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton publicly promised to raise cases of imprisoned human rights activists with President Karimov during a visit to Tashkent. © 2010 Steve Swerdlow/Human Rights Watch

Prison guards tortured rights activist and former prisoner Mutabar Tadjibaev (center) during her nearly three years of imprisonment in Tashkent Women’s Prison. She now lives in Paris, France. © 2013 Fiery Hearts Club

Faiziddin Sidikov was arrested after his family was assaulted at home by unknown assailants following his investigation into local police corruption. He was sentenced to six years but later released under amnesty. © 2013 Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan

Former prisoner Norboi Kholiqitov, president of the Ishtikhan branch of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan (HRSU) in Samarkand province, following his release from prison in 2021. He developed diabetes during his incarceration. © 2013 Bahlfiyev Hamzaev

Writer and opposition figure Mahmudali Mahmudov was released in 2013 after serving over 14 years on trumped-up charges of extremism. He suffered torture and had his sentence extended in prison. © Association for Human Rights in Central Asia

Former prisoner Nurboi Khojigiyrov, president of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan (HRSU) in Samarkand province, following his release from prison in 2011. He developed diabetes during his incarceration. © Association for Human Rights in Central Asia

Abdurasul Khujoyazarov died only 26 days following his release from prison in 2014 on the same day that officials diagnosed him with advanced liver cancer. He told rights groups before his death that officials denied his requests for medical treatment. © Ezgulik

75-year old rights activist Turaboi Turaboev was sentenced to 5 years imprisonment in 2013 and suffered torture in custody before being amnestied. © Fiery Hearts Club
TO THE GOVERNMENT OF UZBEKISTAN

- Immediately and unconditionally release all persons whose cases are detailed in this report and all other prisoners held for peaceful expression of their political views, civil society activism, journalistic activity, or religious views. To the extent that any such individuals are also alleged to have engaged in acts of violence, they should be granted a new and fair trial according to international standards.
- Take immediate steps to eliminate torture and ill-treatment in pretrial detention and penal facilities, including by ensuring unhindered access to counsel at all stages of investigations, ensuring prompt access to appropriate medical care and re-establishing the independent monitoring of prisons.
- Ensure fair trials for all defendants. Promptly investigate all allegations of judicial procedural violations and ensure that judges take into account allegations of torture and witnesses’ allegations of coercion on the part of investigators, exclude all evidence procured through the use of torture or ill-treatment, and thoroughly investigate allegations of fabrication of evidence.
- Provide families of all prisoners with full information regarding the location and current health conditions of their relatives. Rigorously investigate all allegations of intimidation or reprisals against family members and prisoners who communicate with journalists, human rights defenders, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).
- Investigate and hold to account all officials, security service personnel, and penal system staff alleged to have tortured or ill-treated prisoners and detainees or denied requests for medical care.
- Comply with the United Nations Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, which requires Uzbekistan to permit visits by the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (SPT) and to establish an independent national preventive mechanism for the prevention of torture at the domestic level.
- Immediately and fully implement the November 2013 recommendations of the UN Committee against Torture and the February 2003 recommendations issued by the UN special rapporteur on torture following his visit to Uzbekistan in 2002, including the immediate closure of Jasilk prison 64/71.
- Approve the pending requests by eleven UN special procedures to visit Uzbekistan, including the UN special rapporteur on torture; allow unimpeded independent monitoring of prisons by the International Committee of the Red Cross and other independent monitors.
- Cease the practice of arbitrarily exempting prisoners held on politically motivated charges who qualify for amnesty from annual amnesty declarations and of arbitrarily lengthening of prison sentences for minor offences or “violations of prison rules” under article 221 of the criminal code on “disobedience to the terms of punishment.”
- Clarify and bring into line with international standards overbroad criminal articles such as article 158 on “threatening the president,” article 159 on “threatening the constitutional order,” and article 244(2) on “forming, leading, or membership in an extremist, fundamentalist, or otherwise banned organization,” which are frequently manipulated to target people expressing their legitimate right to freedom of expression, speech, or religion.
- Remove criminal responsibility for libel and insult (articles 139 and 140 of the criminal code, respectively) in line with international standards and protect freedom of speech and expression.
- End the crackdown on civil society and allow human rights defenders, journalists, and others to operate free from harassment or other forms of undue government interference. Allow local human rights groups to register and re-register foreign NGOs that were liquidated or otherwise forced to cease operating in Uzbekistan, including through granting visas and accreditation to their staff.

TO THE EUROPEAN UNION AND EU MEMBER STATES

- Given Uzbekistan’s appalling human rights record and persistent failure to meet the human rights criteria articulated by EU foreign ministers, EU member states and institutions should urgently take up the human rights situation in Uzbekistan with a view to devising an appropriate policy response.

SPECIFICALLY, EU MEMBER STATES AND INSTITUTIONS SHOULD

- Consider concrete measures to give real, practical meaning to the Foreign Affairs Council’s (FAC) pledge to make “the depth and quality” of the relationship directly “dependent[en] on Uzbek reforms and progress.”
- The EU High Representative and EU foreign ministers should set a timeline for Uzbek government compliance with the FAC human rights criteria and consider the specific policy consequences that would follow should it not, such as instituting targeted restrictive measures against Uzbek government entities and individuals responsible for grave human rights violations in the country. Such measures should include imposing visa bans and asset freezes with respect to individuals responsible for torture and ill-treatment and the impunity with which these abuses occur, the imprisonment of human rights defenders, journalists, and political opposition figures, and the repression and harassment of independent civil society.

OTHER SPECIFIC MEASURES THE EU SHOULD TAKE

- Given the Uzbek government’s failure to cooperate with UN human rights bodies and the continued pattern of serious and widespread human rights violations in Uzbekistan, support the establishment by the Human Rights Council of a country-specific mechanism in the form of a special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Uzbekistan.
- Press the Uzbek government to permit the registration of local human rights groups and the re-registration of foreign NGOs, including through granting visas and accreditation to their staff.
- Representatives of the EU diplomatic mission and of EU member states in Tashkent should monitor closely and respond to the Uzbek government’s record of politically motivated imprisonment, harassment of human rights defenders, and torture, including through regular contact with local rights groups, monitoring of trials, raising and following up with the authorities on concerns about specific cases, and requesting periodic visits to places of detention.
- Raise concerns related to politically motivated imprisonment, torture, and due process violations at every opportunity, including but not limited to the EU-Uzbekistan human rights dialogue, making publicly available the specific questions raised during the dialogue in this regard and the concrete steps the Uzbek government should take to address the concerns of the EU and EU member states in this area.
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

- Given the Uzbek government’s failure to cooperate with United Nations human rights bodies and the continued pattern of serious and widespread human rights violations in Uzbekistan, the Human Rights Council should establish a country-specific mechanism in the form of a special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Uzbekistan.

- Relevant UN special procedures, including the special rapporteurs on torture and on the situation for human rights defenders, should renew their pending requests for invitations to visit Uzbekistan and use every opportunity to highlight concern and request information from the Uzbek government in the form of public press releases, urgent appeals, and communications about the situation in Uzbekistan relating to their mandates.

- Relevant UN treaty bodies should take up concerns relating to the arrest, detention, torture, and imprisonment of persons on politically motivated charges and to the failure of judicial reforms in all periodic reviews of Uzbekistan, building on the welcome emphasis on these issues by the Human Rights Committee and Committee against Torture, as reflected in their respective concluding observations resulting from their 2007, 2010, and 2013 reviews of Uzbekistan.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

TO THE UNITED STATES

- Given Uzbekistan’s persistent refusal to make “substantial and continuing progress” in its human rights record as outlined in the Consolidated Appropriations Act or to meaningfully address the egregious abuses documented by the US Department of State in its annual country reports on human rights and by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, the US government should urgently place the human rights situation in Uzbekistan more prominently on its bilateral agenda.

- Set a timeline within which the Uzbek government is expected to undertake concrete human rights improvements.

- Make clear specific policy consequences that will follow if it does not. Such consequences should include imposing targeted restrictive measures such as asset freezes and visa bans (some of which already exist) against Uzbek government entities and individuals responsible for grave human rights violations in the country, including those responsible for torture and ill-treatment, politically motivated imprisonment, and the harassment of independent civil society.

OTHER SPECIFIC MEASURES THE US SHOULD TAKE

- Immediately cease all security assistance programs, including direct military aid, to the Uzbek government until it takes meaningful steps to combat torture and address other human rights abuses.

- Given the Uzbek government’s failure to cooperate with United Nations human rights bodies and given the continued pattern of serious and widespread human rights violations in Uzbekistan, support the establishment by the Human Rights Council of a country-specific mechanism in the form of a special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Uzbekistan.

- Press the Uzbek government to permit the registration of local human rights groups and the re-registration of foreign NGOs, including through granting visas and accreditation to their staff.

- US embassy officials should monitor closely and respond to the Uzbek government’s record on politically motivated imprisonment, harassment of human rights defenders, and torture, including through regular contact with local rights groups, monitoring of trials, and requesting updated information on the condition of individuals already in prison; keeping records of allegations of torture; raising with the authorities concerns about specific cases; and requesting periodic visits to places of detention.

- Raise concerns related to politically motivated imprisonment, torture, and the harassment and repression of civil society activists at every opportunity of US-Uzbek dialogue, including but not limited to the US-Uzbekistan Annual Bilateral Consultations, making publicly available the specific questions raised and the concrete steps the Uzbek government should take to address US concerns in this area.

- Lift the waiver in place on existing sanctions, including a ban on visits to the US by high-level officials, which are outlined in the designation by the State Department that Uzbekistan is a “country of particular concern” for its systematic violations of religious freedom, including for the use of torture.
The Uzbek government has arbitrarily imprisoned thousands of individuals on political or religious grounds to enforce its repressive rule since the early 1990s. The victims include human rights activists, journalists, political opposition activists, religious leaders and believers, cultural figures, artists, entrepreneurs, and others imprisoned for the peaceful exercise of their freedom of expression.

Based on more than 150 in-depth interviews and analysis of recently obtained court documents, “Until the Very End”: Politically Motivated Imprisonment in Uzbekistan profiles the cases of 34 of Uzbekistan’s most prominent individuals imprisoned on politically motivated charges. Those interviewed include 10 individuals previously imprisoned on such charges.

The prisoners whose cases this report documents have experienced a wide range of human rights violations, including denial of access to counsel, incommunicado detention, pretrial and post-conviction torture, abusive and prolonged solitary confinement, the denial of appropriate medical care, and the arbitrary denial of amnesty and extension of prison sentences. Human Rights Watch calls on the Uzbek government for their immediate and unconditional release.

Uzbekistan’s international partners, including the United States, the European Union and EU member states, and the UN Human Rights Council, should convey clearly to Tashkent, both in public and in private, the urgent need for concrete human rights improvements, including the release of all those imprisoned on politically motivated charges.

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