

The Uzbek government currently holds in prison at least fourteen human rights defenders for no reason other than their legitimate human rights work. They are: Solijon Abdurakhmanov, Azam Formonov, Nosim Isakov, Gaibullo Jalilov, Alisher Karamatov, Jamshid Karimov, Norboi Kholjigitov, Rasul Khudainasarov, Ganihon Mamatkhanov, Farkhat Mukhtarov, Habibulla Okpulatov, Yuldash Rasulov, Dilmurod Saidov, and Akzam Turgunov.

Many other civil society activists, including independent journalists and political dissidents, are likewise serving sentences on politically motivated charges, such as Yusuf Jumaev, a poet and political dissident sentenced to five years in a penal colony after calling for President Islam Karimov's resignation in the run-up to the December 2007 presidential elections. According to his family, Jumaev continues to suffer ill-treatment in prison, including regular beatings by prison guards, and is in very poor health.

Some of the activists featured here worked to shed light on the May 2005 massacre in Andijan, others worked to protect farmers' rights, document torture, and expose corruption and religious persecution. They are all in prison as a result of daring to take on such work.

Human Rights Watch calls on the Uzbek government to immediately and unconditionally release all wrongfully imprisoned activists and urges Uzbekistan's partners to make their freedom a top priority in their dialogues with the Uzbek government.

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH



UZBEKISTAN'S IMPRISONED HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

SOLIJON ABDURAKHMANOV



Abdurakhmanov (b. 1950) is a Karakalpakstan-based independent and outspoken journalist who has written on sensitive issues such as social and economic justice, human rights, corruption, and the legal status of Karakalpakstan in Uzbekistan. He worked closely with UzNews.net, an independent online news agency, and also freelanced for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Voice of America, and the Institute for War and Peace Reporting. He also is a member of the human rights group "Committee for the Protection of Personal Rights."

Traffic police arrested Abdurakhmanov on June 7, 2008, when they stopped his car, allegedly to check his identity, and claimed they found drugs on the underside of his car. Abdurakhmanov denies knowing about or having anything to do with the drugs and his brother, Bakhrom, a lawyer who also represented him, and fellow human rights defenders believe that the police planted the drugs. During the pre-trial investigation, the authorities primarily questioned Abdurakhmanov about his journalistic activities.

On October 10, 2008, following a trial that failed to meet fair trial standards, Abdurakhmanov was found guilty of a fabricated charge of selling drugs and sentenced to 10 years in prison. The sentence has been upheld twice on appeal. Abdurakhmanov is currently held in prison colony 64/61 in Karshi.

AZAM FORMONOV



Formonov (b. 1978) was an active member of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan in Gulistan, in Syrdaryo province, who along with fellow defender Alisher Karamatov monitored violations of social and economic rights, in particular the rights of farmers and the disabled.

Formonov was arrested on April 29, 2006 and sentenced on June 15, 2006 to nine years in prison by the Yangier City Court on charges of attempting to blackmail a local businessman. He was tried without the presence of either his attorney of choice or his non-attorney public defender, Tolib Yakubov, then-chair of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan, who now lives in exile. A week before the sentencing, in a private conversation at the prison with Yakubov, he described how he had been tortured and pressured into signing a false confession.

Formonov is currently held at strict-regime Jaslyk prison (a violation of the terms of his verdict which specified that he be put into a "general" regime prison). Formonov has alleged being tortured since he was placed there, including being stripped of his overclothing and left in an unheated punishment cell for 23 days in January 2008, when temperatures reached approximately -20 C. His family told Human Rights Watch that he has been repeatedly prevented from being eligible for an amnesty – most recently in September 2009 – because the authorities bring charges of violations of the prison regime against him. Formonov was surprised to learn he had been found guilty of violating prison regulations, since he did not even know that any accusations had been made against him. One such regulation was apparently "helping prisoners write appeals" although Formonov says he was never in possession of a pen and at most, only spoke to others about how to appeal their sentences.

NOSIM ISAKOV

Isakov (b. 1966) is a member of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan who monitored human rights abuses in Jizzakh city.

Isakov was arrested on October 27, 2005, and charged with hooliganism on the basis of a neighbor's written complaint stating that he exposed himself in public to his neighbor's teenage daughter. Isakov's family and fellow human rights defenders found the accusation particularly shocking and offensive because he is a pious Muslim. At his trial, which began December 15, 2005, Isakov maintained his innocence and told the judge that while in pre-trial detention he had been beaten on his head with a bottle filled with water.

On December 20, 2005, Isakov was handed an eight-year prison sentence on multiple charges including hooliganism and extortion. According to local sources, Isakov is serving his sentence at Karshi Prison and his family members have been warned not to speak to anyone about him.

GAIBULLO JALILOV



Jalilov (b. 1964) is a Karshi-based human rights defender who has been a member of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan since 2003. His work has focused on the crackdown on independent Muslims in the Kashkadarya region of Uzbekistan. At the time of his arrest in September 2009, he reportedly had collected information on over 200 arrests of independent Muslims in the region.

On January 18, 2010, in a trial that did not adhere to fair trial standards, the Kashkadarya District Criminal Court sentenced Jalilov to nine years in prison on fabricated charges of anti-constitutional activity, production and distribution of banned material, and membership in a banned religious organization. Despite the absence of credible evidence, Jalilov and his three co-defendants were tried as members of a criminal religious group with a separatist agenda.

On March 9, 2010, the nine-year sentence was upheld on appeal. Jalilov, who already had a lung condition, was brought to the hearing with a swollen eye, suggesting that he recently had been ill-treated in custody. His relatives told Human Rights Watch that Jalilov looked very weak and could not stop coughing and that he had told them that several days earlier a man had entered his cell and punched and kicked him repeatedly. As of this writing, it is not known where Jalilov is serving his sentence.

ALISHER KARAMATOV



Karamatov (b. 1968) is an active member of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan in Gulistan, in Syrdaryo province who along with fellow defender Azam Formonov monitored violations of social and economic rights, in particular the rights of farmers and the disabled.

Karamatov was arrested on April 29, 2006, and sentenced on June 15, 2006 to nine years in prison on fabricated extortion charges following a trial that independent observers determined was unfair. According to his public defender, Karamatov confessed to the charges after being tortured, including being beaten on the soles of his feet and suffocated with a gas mask.

Karamatov's wife told Human Rights Watch that he has been in very poor health since he was put in prison. By November 2008 Karamatov had become extremely thin and had blood coming out of his mouth, and a month later the chief doctor of prison colony 64/18 wrote in a medical report that both of Karamatov's lungs were infected with tuberculosis.

Prison officials have accused Karamatov of violating internal prison rules to render him ineligible for amnesty or early release, including for allegedly saying prayers and growing out his beard. On December 30, 2008, when Karamatov refused to sign a document attesting a breach of the prison regime, prison guards reportedly escorted him outside, took off his hat and jersey, and made him stand in freezing temperatures for nearly four hours in order to force him to sign the document.

JAMSHID KARIMOV



Karimov (b. 1968) is an independent journalist from Jizzakh and vocal critic of the government's policies who regularly published articles on the internet, including on Uznews.net.

Karimov disappeared on September 12, 2006, while attempting to visit his mother at the Jizzakh Province Hospital. Soon thereafter Karimov was forcibly admitted to the Samarkand Psychiatric Hospital where according to unconfirmed reports, he was subjected to forcible treatment with antipsychotic drugs. There is no medical basis for Karimov's confinement or treatment, and it is widely believed that he is being held for no reason other than his journalistic activities.

Human Rights Watch has received worrying reports indicating that Karimov's family has been harassed and intimidated by the authorities and warned not to speak with anyone about his case.

In late spring 2008 Karimov's mother passed away and he was allowed to attend the funeral and to be with his family for five days, but was instructed not to contact anyone outside the immediate family during this time.

NORBOI KHOLJIGITOV



Kholjigitov (b. 1953) is a member of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan in Samarkand province who defended farmers' rights, assisting farmers fighting expropriation of their farms. After working as the director of two state-owned farms he established his own farm, called Free Peasants, in 2004, and supported the poor.

Kholjigitov was arrested on June 4, 2005 and sentenced on October 18, 2005 to 10 years in prison on fabricated charges of extortion and slander. Since his imprisonment, Kholjigitov has faced ill-treatment and harassment by prison authorities, particularly after sending a complaint to the Supreme Court of Uzbekistan in November 2008. Prison officials have reportedly threatened him with transfer to a psychiatric clinic if he continues to file complaints. He is serving his sentence in a prison in Karshi.

According to his family, Kholjigitov's health has deteriorated markedly since 2005 and it is getting progressively worse. He has apparently lost partial control of his right arm and leg due to complications from a severe form of diabetes and has difficulty walking. He has also lost all of his teeth. In December 2009, Kholjigitov was temporarily transferred to a prison clinic due to his ill-health. He is in urgent need of appropriate medical care.

ABDURASUL KHUDAINASAROV



Khudainasarov (b. 1956) is the head of the Angren branch of the human rights organization Ezgulik where his work focused on fighting corruption in the police and security forces.

Khudainasarov was arrested on July 21, 2005 and sentenced on January 12, 2006, to nine and one-half years in prison on fabricated charges of extortion, fraud, abuse of power, and falsification of documents. In a letter to his lawyer, Khudainasarov complained about beatings and ill-treatment he was subjected to the day after his trial ended. According to the letter, Khudainasarov was also put in a punishment cell the day after the verdict was issued in retribution for not confessing during the trial.

Khudainasarov's relatives reported to Human Rights Watch that he has suffered torture and ill-treatment in prison. Khudainasarov has filed complaints with the prosecutor's office and went on a temporary hunger strike to protest his ill-treatment. According to his wife, Khudainasarov attempted suicide in early fall 2008 and was rescued by fellow inmates. In March 2010 Khudainasarov complained to his wife of ill-health and body pain. She told Human Rights Watch that he looked pale and weak and does not have access to enough medicine. He is currently serving his sentence at a prison colony in Bekabad.

GANIHON MAMATKHANOV



Mamatkhanov (b. 1951) is a Ferghana-based human rights defender affiliated with the group Committee for the Protection of Individual Rights. He works on the protection of social and economic rights, including the rights of farmers, a number of whom were the

victims of land confiscation in 2009. Before his arrest, Mamatkhanov regularly provided commentary on the human rights situation in Ferghana to Radio Ozodlik, the Uzbek branch of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

Authorities arrested Mamatkhanov on October 9, 2009, under circumstances that appear to have been staged to frame him. He was sentenced to five years in prison on November 25, 2009, on fabricated charges of fraud and bribery. His trial was marred by serious procedural violations. Witnesses reportedly testified that the investigator had instructed them how to act and what to say before and after Mamatkhanov's arrest.

Mamatkhanov's five-year prison sentence was converted to four and one-half years in a prison colony on appeal at the Ferghana Regional Court in mid-January 2010. As of this writing, however, Mamatkhanov has been transferred to Navoi prison, reportedly for fighting with a colony official in March 2010.

FARKHAD MUKHTAROV



Mukhtarov (b. 1968) is a long-term member of the Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan who offered legal advice and consultations to persons who suffered violations of their social and economic rights. Mukhtarov acted as a public defender in a number of such cases and prior to his arrest

actively participated in Alliance pickets calling attention to Uzbekistan's dismal human rights situation.

Mukhtarov was arrested on July 17, 2009 and sentenced to five years in prison on October 2, 2009 on fabricated charges of fraud and bribery. The Yunusabad District Criminal Court convicted Mukhtarov and sentenced him to five years in prison in a trial that was riddled with procedural violations. Plaintiffs withdrew their claims against Mukhtarov, while the judge failed to ensure there was adequate Uzbek-Russian translation and refused to allow Mukhtarov's lawyer to admit material into evidence or call defense witnesses.

Mukhtarov's conviction was upheld on appeal, though his prison term was reduced to four years. He is currently serving his sentence in a prison colony in Karshi. According to information received by Human Rights Watch, Mukhtarov has begun to lose his teeth and has lost a lot of weight.

HABIBULLA OKPULATOV



Okpulatov (b. 1950) is a member of the Ishtikhan District Branch of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan and worked as a teacher in a school in Samarkand until his arrest on June 4, 2005. He was tried along with fellow human rights defender Norboi Kholjigitov by the Samarkand Regional Court

and on October 18, 2005, was sentenced to six years in prison. Okpulatov was serving his sentence in Navoi Prison No. 64/29 until January 2010, when he was moved to prison colony 64/65 in Almalyk.

Okpulatov is in very poor health and is in urgent need of medical care. His relatives report that his right leg is debilitated and both eyes are visibly infected and cause him much pain.

On September 30, 2009, Okpulatov was sentenced to an additional three years and eight days in prison by the Navoi City Criminal Court for alleged violations of prison regulations. The verdict stated that the court hearing was open to the public, but neither Okpulatov's relatives nor his lawyer were informed of the date of the trial, which took place in the prison. Authorities in March 2010 brought new charges of violating the prison regime against Okpulatov, allegedly for lagging behind his prison brigade.

YULDASH RASULOV



Rasulov (b. 1969) has been a member of the Kashkadarya branch of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan since 2002. He worked to defend the rights of people persecuted for their religious beliefs and affiliations, especially those whose religious practice falls beyond the confines of state-sponsored Islam.

Rasulov was arrested in April 2007 sentenced in October 2007 to 10 years in prison on charges that included alleged anti-constitutional activity and membership in a banned religious organization. He is being held in prison colony No. 64/25 in Karabulbazar in the Bukhara region.

Authorities had previously brought politically motivated charges against Rasulov, sentencing him in September 2002 to a seven-year prison terms for attempting to overthrow the constitutional order, distributing "extremist" literature and membership in a banned religious organization. However, the evidence presented against Rasulov in court only showed that he prayed five times a day and had listened to tapes on Islam commonly available in the mid-1990s. Rasulov stated at trial that self-incriminating statements about his alleged involvement in "extremist" activities were made after he had been pressured. He was released after spending roughly seven months in detention.

DILMUROD SAIDOV



Saidov (b. 1962) is an independent journalist who has worked to expose corruption, abuse of power, and the general social and economic situation in the Samarkand region. His articles have been published in many local newspapers, as well as by internet new agencies

Voice of Freedom and Uznews.net, among others. Saidov is a member of the Tashkent Regional Branch of Ezgulik, and since 2004 had been actively helping farmers defend their rights in the Samarkand region.

Saidov was arrested on February 22, 2009 at his home in Tashkent on fabricated charges of extortion. On July 30, 2009, after a flawed investigation and a trial riddled with procedural violations, the Tailak District Court in Samarkand sentenced Saidov to 12 and one-half years in prison.

Saidov's sentence has been upheld twice on appeal. During a meeting with his lawyer in late February 2010, Saidov asked him to submit a statement to the Supreme Court, but the document was confiscated by prison authorities as his lawyer tried to leave their meeting. Saidov told his family that he was later "punished."

In February 2010, Saidov was transferred to prison clinic UYa 64/18 in Tashkent to receive medical treatment (Saidov suffers from an acute form of tuberculosis). His family told Human Rights Watch that he will soon be transferred back to the prison colony in Navoi despite his ill-health.

On November 5, 2009, Saidov's wife, Barno Djumanova, and the couple's six-year-old daughter, Rukhshona, died in an automobile accident on the Tashkent-Samarkand highway. They had travelled to Kiziltepe to deliver Saidov's passport to the prison administration.

AKZAM TURGUNOV



Turgunov (b. 1952) founded the human rights group Mazlum and is a member of the opposition political party ERK. He is an advocate for the rights of political and religious prisoners and speaks out against torture, helping others fight the police system. In the months leading up

to his arrest on July 11, 2008, Turgunov had been working in Karakalpakstan as a public defender in a number of sensitive cases.

On October 23, 2008, the Amurdarinskii court in Manget, Karakalpakstan, sentenced Turgunov to 10 years in prison on fabricated charges of extortion. Serious due process violations undermined Turgunov's right to a fair and impartial trial and he was ill-treated in custody. On July 14, while he was in the investigator's office writing a statement, someone poured boiling water down his neck and back, causing him to lose consciousness and sustain severe burns. Authorities ordered an investigation into Turgunov's ill-treatment only after he removed his shirt during a court hearing on September 16 to show the scars from the burns, which covered a large portion of his back and neck. The subsequent forensic medical exam, however, concluded that his burns were minor and did not warrant any action.

Turgunov's family told Human Rights Watch that he has lost a significant amount of weight and is in very bad health. He is forced to work multiple shifts at a brick factory, and has complained of severe leg pain as a result of this work, for which he is not given appropriate treatment.