

World Report 2025 - Uzbekistan

Government authorities increasingly stifled human rights activism in 2024, targeting activists, bloggers, and others with unfounded criminal charges, including for “insulting the president online.” At least two bloggers remained in forced psychiatric detention in violation of their rights to liberty and security and health. Promised legal reforms stalled. Those responsible for security force’s use of excessive force to quell July 2022 protests in Karakalpakstan, an autonomous republic, continued to evade justice. Consensual same-sex relations between men remained criminalized. Impunity for torture and ill-treatment and domestic violence remained the norm.

Accountability and Justice

Authorities took [no steps in 2024](#) to hold any senior officials accountable for the excessive force used in July 2022 to suppress protests in the autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan, in which 21 people died. On December 26, the commission tasked with investigating human rights violations during and after the protests [presented its report to parliament](#), but still had not made the report publicly accessible at time of writing.

Uzbekistan’s Supreme Court on July 23 [rejected the appeal](#) of wrongfully imprisoned Karakalpak activist and lawyer Dauletmurat Tazhimuratov, who was sentenced to 16 years in prison in January 2023. Rights groups have [repeatedly raised concern](#) about [his treatment in prison](#).

Civil Society

Authorities in 2024 increasingly targeted independent activists with unfounded criminal charges and blocked independent monitors’ access to the country.

On February 22, Uzbekistan’s Supreme Court ruled that Alga Karakalpakstan, an opposition group in Karakalpakstan, is “extremist” and banned its activities in Uzbekistan. In late May, a Karakalpakstan court sentenced Parakhat Musapbarov to six years in prison for “membership in a banned extremist organization.”

On April 30, police arrested [Dilmurod Mukhitdinov](#), a human rights activist from Andijan, on criminal charges of extortion and degrading the honor and dignity of a person. Other local activists expressed concern that his arrest was linked to his collaboration with Achchiq TV, a local news agency known for reporting critical of government. In mid-November, Mukhitdinov was sentenced to seven-and-a-half years in prison.

In May, the rights defender [Klara Sakharova was subject to online harassment](#), with an anonymous user threatening her and sending obscene insults.

On July 18, a Kashkadarya court sentenced the activists [Dildora Khakimova and Nargiza Keldiyorova](#) to more than six years in prison on dubious extortion charges after they criticized corruption in the education system in Kashkadarya. An appeals court on November 6 upheld the verdict.

In early April, [police stopped ArtDocFest Asia](#) claiming a violation of the rules on holding mass events, and fined Timur Karpov, the founder of the art gallery where the festival was held, for a violation of “notification procedures” under the administrative code.

On September 19, Justice Ministry officials broke up a Civic Solidarity Platform event of women nongovernmental organization leaders. Authorities threatened to bring administrative charges

against Tolekan Ismailova, a human rights defender from Kyrgyzstan, for holding an “unsanctioned” NGO activity.

Parliament [in June passed a law](#) allowing authorities to [designate as “undesirable” foreigners](#) or stateless people whose speech or actions are perceived to “contradict the state sovereignty, territorial integrity, and security of the Republic of Uzbekistan, provoke interstate, social, national, racial, and religious discord, discrediting the honor, dignity, or history of the people of Uzbekistan” and ban them from the country for up to five years. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev signed the law on November 15.

The [UN special rapporteur on the right to adequate housing](#), Balakrishnan Rajagopal, upon concluding his trip to Uzbekistan in August, expressed concern that “victims of forced evictions, housing rights defenders, lawyers, bloggers and journalists reporting about arbitrary housing demolitions are subject to intimidation, prosecuted or detained on dubious grounds.”

Twice in 2024, Uzbekistan’s Foreign Ministry left pending without answer applications for a visa to Uzbekistan submitted by a Human Rights Watch senior Central Asia researcher, preventing her from visiting Uzbekistan.

Freedom of Speech

Uzbek authorities intensified their crackdown on free speech, imprisoning [critical bloggers on spurious criminal charges](#) and imprisoning [citizens](#) for up to five years for “[insulting the president online](#).” Twenty-seven-year-old D. Tursunov was sentenced to five years in prison in March 2024 for comments he left online about the president. Authorities continue to hold in forced psychiatric detention the blogger, Valijon Kalonov, who had criticized President Mirziyoyev in advance of presidential elections in 2021 and whom police arrested in August 2021 on charges of “insulting the president online.” Another blogger, Shahida Salomova, is similarly being held in forced psychiatric hospital in Tashkent. Defamation and insult remain criminal offenses, despite President Mirziyoyev’s pledge in 2020 to decriminalize both offenses.

On April 30, a court found Uzbekistan national [Sevara Shaydullaeva](#) guilty of “intentionally storing and distributing materials containing an open call to overthrow the constitutional order of Uzbekistan” after she had sent her mother a video clip of Uzbekistan’s late President Islam Karimov speaking to Islamists in 1991, which she had downloaded from YouTube. She was sentenced to 30 months’ restricted freedom.

Torture and Ill-treatment

Torture and ill-treatment persist as a serious problem and [police beat detainees with impunity](#). In May, Tashkent police apparently beat Denis Nikolaev, a detainee, with a mop while he was handcuffed. In June, one police officer was arrested in connection with the death of [Dilmurod Yusupvaliev](#), who succumbed to injuries he apparently sustained while in custody at a Tashkent region police station having been detained for allegedly “[violating public order](#).” His brother, who was detained along with him, said [eight police officers](#) were involved in the beating and called for more arrests.

The United Nations [Human Rights Committee](#) in March called on Uzbekistan “to take robust measures to eradicate torture and ill-treatment.”

Freedom of Religion

Uzbek authorities [restrict religious freedom](#) by preventing [registration of religious communities](#), subjecting former religious prisoners to arbitrary controls, and prosecuting Muslims on broad and

vaguely worded [extremism-related charges](#). At least two groups of up to 23 Muslims were arrested in 2024 for alleged membership in Hizb-ut Tahrir, a religious movement banned in Uzbekistan, harkening back to a repressive practice common under late president Islam Karimov.

Khayrullo Tursunov, who previously served time in prison for exercising his right to freedom of religion, was [re-arrested in mid-June](#). He remained in pre-trial detention at time of writing. In February, a court fined [two Jehovah's Witnesses](#) for proselytizing.

Uzbekistan's parliament is considering [a draft law that would ban and introduce punishments](#) for parents or guardians who allow their children to receive "illegal" religious education before the age of 18. [Media](#) and [religious freedom watchdogs](#) continued to report intermittent incidents in which police detain men wearing long beards and forcibly shave and fine them.

Forced Labor

[Independent labor rights monitors](#) reported in February 2024 that in districts with a shortage of cotton pickers, officials used coercion to recruit pickers to fulfill quotas during the 2023 harvest. The risk of forced labor persists in the cotton sector, with continued state control over the cotton harvest and of the agricultural sector more generally, and still inadequate protection of the right to freedom of association. Agricultural workers and farmers continued to face constraints on their [right to organize](#).

In January, an Internal Affairs Ministry official threatened an Uzbek Forum monitor with criminal charges and said the monitor was putting their life in danger by reporting on labor rights violations in the agricultural sector. On April 18, a pro-government blogger and another man intimidated and insulted human rights defenders [Umida Niyazova and Sharifa Madrakhimova](#) while they were carrying out labor rights monitoring in the Fergana region. The men accused Niyazova of "organizing information attacks against Uzbekistan." Authorities have not brought the perpetrators to account in either incident.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Uzbekistan continues to ignore calls to decriminalize consensual same-sex sexual conduct between men. Police target gay and bisexual men and transgender women for arbitrary detention, prosecution, and imprisonment. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people face discrimination and harassment from state and non-state actors. In early November, leader of the Milliy Tiklanish party and member of parliament Alisher Kadyrov reported that his party was working on a draft law banning [LGBT propaganda](#).