



# Amnesty International Report 2014/15 - Uzbekistan

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## Republic of Uzbekistan

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Torture and other ill-treatment in detention facilities remained routine and pervasive. The authorities continued to reject allegations of torture committed by law enforcement and National Security officers and failed to effectively investigate credible and persistent reports of such human rights violations. Prison sentences of individuals convicted of anti-state and terrorism offences were arbitrarily extended and many were denied necessary medical attention. Those forcibly returned from abroad were at real risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

## Torture and other ill-treatment

Persistent and credible allegations continued to emerge of pervasive and routine torture and other ill-treatment by law enforcement and National Security (SNB) officers during arrest, transfer, in police custody and in pre-trial detention and by law enforcement and prison personnel in post-conviction detention facilities.<sup>[1]</sup>

The authorities continued to vigorously deny such reports, including during public examinations of Uzbekistan's human rights record at the EU-Uzbekistan Human Rights Dialogue in November. They instead pointed at the implementation of wide-ranging initiatives in the field of human rights education, such as numerous torture prevention training programmes for law enforcement officers and judicial and medical officials, and increased co-operation on human rights with the international community. However, as in previous years, these developments failed to lead to necessary, genuine and wide-reaching systemic reforms. Serious concerns remained about the authorities' failure to implement existing laws and safeguards and to adopt new effective measures towards the prevention of torture. The authorities also failed to effectively investigate reports of torture and other ill-treatment.

In November, the UN Human Rights Committee requested that Uzbekistan report on measures taken to implement the Committee's numerous previous recommendations to address torture from 1999, 2005 and 2010.

## **Prison conditions**

Certain categories of prisoners, such as human rights defenders, government critics and individuals convicted of membership in Islamist parties and groups or Islamic movements banned in Uzbekistan were often subjected to severe punishment regimes in prisons where they were serving their sentences. Some prisoners had their sentences extended for long periods – sometimes repeatedly – even for alleged minor infractions of the prison rules.

Murad Dzhuraev, a former parliamentarian who was sentenced to 12 years in prison on politically motivated charges in 1995, subsequently had his sentence extended four times under Article 221 of the Criminal Code for allegedly breaking prison rules.<sup>[2]</sup> One of the "violations" he had committed was failing to change out of slippers when entering the hall where prisoners slept.

Murad Dzhuraev's health seriously deteriorated during his extended time in prison. His wife was allowed to visit him for two days in July, and reported that he was almost blind and had lost all of his teeth. She alleged that he had not had access to adequate medical care since 1994. The prison authorities had also tried to isolate him from other prisoners by threatening to extend the sentences of every prisoner who dared to speak with him. He spent long periods of time in solitary confinement as a punishment allegedly for breaking prison rules.

At least two prisoners were reported to have died because they had not been provided with necessary medical care. Human rights defender Abdurasul Khudainazarov died of advanced terminal cancer on 26 June, three weeks after a court ordered his early release on humanitarian grounds. His family reported that over a period of eight years prison officials had repeatedly denied him necessary medical treatment for his cancer and other serious medical problems despite numerous requests and clear physical indications that his health was seriously deteriorating.

There were no independent monitoring mechanisms in place to inspect all places of detention and domestic or international NGOs did not carry out any form of regular, unannounced or unsupervised prison monitoring. Diplomats, while granted access to some detention facilities, were as a rule accompanied by prison or law enforcement officials during their visits. In January, the authorities granted a small number of independent human rights activists permission to visit four imprisoned colleagues. The human rights defenders were accompanied by law enforcement and prison officials and their visits were recorded on film. One of the prisoners reported that he had been allowed to have a hot shower before the meeting and was given new clothes ahead of the scheduled visit. In November, the NGO Human Rights Watch sent a delegation to Uzbekistan but all requests to visit prisoners and places of detention were denied by the authorities.

## **Counter-terror and security**

Individuals forcibly returned to Uzbekistan in the name of national security and the "fight against terrorism" were often held incommunicado, increasing their risk of torture or other ill-treatment. The authorities relentlessly pursued the return of individuals they suspected of involvement in bombings in the capital Tashkent in 1999 and 2004, protests in Andizhan in 2005 (during which hundreds of people were killed when the security forces fired on thousands of mostly peaceful protesters), and various other acts of violence. They accused some of being members of banned violent Islamist groups and also sought the extradition of political opponents, government critics, and wealthy individuals who had fallen out of favour with the authorities in Tashkent.

The European Court of Human Rights issued at least 15 judgments in 2013 and 2014 prohibiting the forcible transfer of individuals to Uzbekistan – especially those suspected of membership of an Islamist party or of a group banned in the country – due to the real risk of torture on return. The Court ruled in October, in the case of *Mamazhonov v Russia*, that the transfer of Ikromzhon Mamazhonov from Russia to Uzbekistan would violate Article 3 (prohibition of torture) of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Court noted "that there had been no improvement in the criminal justice system of Uzbekistan in recent years, in particular concerning prosecution for religiously and politically motivated crimes and that there was certain evidence that persons accused of such crimes were at risk of ill-treatment."

In November, Mirsobir Khamidkariev, a producer and businessman from Uzbekistan who had sought asylum in Moscow, Russian Federation, was sentenced to eight years in prison by a court in Tashkent.<sup>[3]</sup> He was convicted of membership of a banned Islamist organization, a charge he strongly denied. On 9 June he was reportedly abducted and ill-treated by officers of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) from a street in central Moscow, and handed over to Uzbekistani law enforcement officers at an airport in Moscow and illegally transferred to Tashkent the following day.

Mirsobir Khamidkariev's lawyer in Moscow did not know his whereabouts until he reappeared in the basement of a detention facility run by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Tashkent two weeks later. According to his Russian lawyer, who was able to get access to him in Tashkent on 31 October, Mirsobir Khamidkariev was subjected to torture and other ill-treatment by law enforcement officers in Tashkent for two months to force him to confess to fabricated charges. He was tied head down to a bar attached to the wall, beaten repeatedly, and had seven of his teeth knocked out and two of his ribs broken.

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1. Cases of torture and other ill-treatment in Uzbekistan (EUR 62/007/2014)  
[www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR62/007/2014/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR62/007/2014/en)

2. Uzbekistan: Jailed parliamentarian denied medical help – Murad Dzhuraev (EUR 62/003/2014)  
[www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR62/003/2014/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR62/003/2014/en)

3. Uzbekistan: Fear of unfair trial for extradited refugee – Mirsobir Khamidkariev (EUR 62/008/2014) [www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR62/008/2014/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR62/008/2014/en)