



Human Rights Watch Concerns on Uzbekistan

Submitted to the UN Human Rights Committee on the occasion of its Pre-Sessional Review of Uzbekistan

June 2009

This memorandum provides an overview of Human Rights Watch's main concerns with respect to the human rights situation in Uzbekistan, submitted to the United Nations Human Rights Committee ("the Committee") in advance of its pre-sessional review of Uzbekistan in July 2009. We hope it will inform the Committee's preparation for its upcoming review of the Uzbek government's compliance with its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ("the Covenant").

The Uzbek government's human rights record, long marked by repression and abuse, has remained atrocious in the period since the Committee's last review of Uzbekistan. Of urgent concern is the plight of civil society, which remains the target of constant government intimidation and harassment, and the more than a dozen human rights defenders, journalists and other independent civic and political activists whom the Uzbek government continues to imprison on politically motivated grounds. The government persists in its denial of accountability for the massacre of hundreds of mostly unarmed protesters fleeing a demonstration in the city of Andijan in May 2005. It clamps down on media freedoms and suppresses religious worship. There continues to be a deeply entrenched culture of impunity for serious human rights violations, including for torture and ill-treatment, which remain rampant. The judiciary lacks independence and the weak parliament does not effectively check executive power. Government-sponsored forced child labor in the cotton sector remains a key human rights concern.

The Uzbek government's record of cooperation with international institutions, particularly with United Nations mechanisms, remains poor. Most strikingly, it continues to refuse access to the country to no fewer than eight UN special procedures despite their longstanding and repeated requests for invitations to visit Uzbekistan. The government has also demonstrated its lack of commitment to cooperation through its continued failure to implement UN expert bodies' recommendations pertaining to torture. A more recent reflection of the Uzbek government's intransigence was its approach to the Universal

Periodic Review process, which was characterized by a refusal to accept any real criticism of its human rights record, and even an outright denial of the existence of a number of well-documented problems.

Human Rights Watch considers the upcoming Human Rights Committee review of Uzbekistan to be a crucial opportunity to highlight the many pressing concerns that continue to mar the Uzbek government's human rights record, with a view to seeing them addressed. At the conclusion of this overview is a summary of the key concerns we hope to see the Committee take up with the Uzbek government, followed by an Annex that provides brief case descriptions on the more than a dozen human rights activists the Uzbek government continues to imprison on politically-motivated grounds.

Accountability for the Andijan massacre (Covenant articles 2, 6, 7, 17)

The Uzbek government has steadfastly refused to clarify the circumstances surrounding the 2005 massacre by government forces in Andijan, or to hold accountable those responsible for the killings.¹ Instead, it has sought to rewrite history and silence all those who might question its version of the events, launching an intense crackdown in Andijan itself and exerting pressure on all who knew the truth about the events. Several hundred individuals who were convicted and sentenced in closed trials in 2005 and 2006 are believed to remain in prison serving lengthy sentences.

To this date, the Uzbek government continues vigorously to seek out and persecute anyone it deems to have a connection to or information about the Andijan events. This is particularly true for many of the relatives of hundreds of persons who fled to Kyrgyzstan in the immediate aftermath of the massacre and were later resettled in third countries, as well as those who fled but later returned to Andijan. Intense government pressure, taking the form of interrogations, surveillance, ostracism and in at least one case an overt threat to life, has continued to generate new refugees from Andijan, years after the massacre.²

In a recent example, on May 26, 2009, within hours of violent incidents, including at least one suicide bombing, that reportedly took place in Andijan that day, police visited at least three homes of family members of individuals either serving sentences for alleged

¹ For more on Human Rights Watch's work on the Andijan massacre and its immediate aftermath, see Human Rights Watch's May 2005 and September 2005 reports, "Bullets Were Falling Like Rain: The Andijan Massacre, May 13, 2005," at <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2005/06/06/bullets-were-falling-rain-o> and "Burying the Truth: Uzbekistan Rewrites the Story of the Andijan Massacre," at <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2005/09/18/burying-truth-o>.

² For a more detailed analysis of Uzbek government repression in Andijan years after the massacre, see Human Rights Watch's May 2008 report "Saving Its Secrets: Government Repression in Andijan," at <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2008/05/11/saving-its-secrets-o>.

involvement in the May 2005 events or who fled Uzbekistan in the aftermath and have been resettled elsewhere. The government also appears to have shut down or severely restricted mobile phone coverage in the Ferghana Valley in the days that followed the violence, effectively cutting off information flow from and to the area.

Persecution of human rights defenders and repression of civil society activism (Covenant articles 7, 9, 10, 14, 17, 19, 21, 22)

In the aftermath of the Andijan massacre, the Uzbek government unleashed a fierce crackdown on civil society unprecedented in its proportions. It imprisoned dozens of human rights defenders, independent journalists, and political activists for speaking out about the Andijan events and calling for accountability for the May 13 killings. The authorities also blocked the activities of local and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Many human rights defenders and other activists have had to flee the country out of fear for their security or that of their loved ones.

As of this writing, the government continues to hold at least thirteen human rights defenders in prison for no reason other than their legitimate human rights work. They are: Solijon Abdurakhmanov, Azam Formonov, Alisher Karamatov, Jamshid Karimov, Norboi Kholjigitov, Abdusattor Irzaev, Habibulla Okpulatov, Nosim Isakov, Rasul Khudainasarov, Yuldash Rasulov, Dilmurod Saidov, Akzam Turgunov, and Kushodbek Usmonov.³ Many other civic activists, independent journalists and political dissidents are also serving prison sentences on politically motivated charges, including political opposition leader Sanjar Umarov and poet and political dissident Yusuf Yumaev. At least two new arrests have taken place in the last six months alone – of Kushodbek Usmonov in January 2009 and Dilmurod Saidov in February 2009. Worrying, credible reports that a number of imprisoned activists are suffering severe health problems as a result of poor conditions and ill-treatment in Uzbekistan's notoriously abusive prison system underscore the urgency of securing their immediate and unconditional release.

Independent civil society activism remains severely restricted, with authorities detaining and threatening with prosecution human rights defenders, journalists, and others for their peaceful activism. In a recent example, five members of the Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan, a vocal grassroots group that works on a range of human rights issues, were detained, questioned, and threatened in three separate incidents on May 27 and 29, 2009. Police beat one of them, Ilnur Abdulov, on the head, chest, and back, at the time of his detention on May 27. Just weeks before, Alliance member Elena Urlaeva was violently

³ Please see Annex for details on each case.

assaulted and threatened by two unknown assailants when she was leaving her apartment with her 5-year-old son.⁴

A particularly insidious practice employed by the Uzbek government is a combination of threats, harassment, and sometimes even imprisonment of activists' children or other relatives in retaliation for their human rights or civic work. Examples include Ikhtior Khamraev, the son of Bakhtior Khamraev, a well-known human rights defender from Jizzakh province. Ikhtior was arrested in August 2006 and sentenced the following month to three years' imprisonment on hooliganism charges, widely believed to be in retribution for his father's human rights work. Bahodir Mukhtarov, the son of Mamatkul Mukhtarov, another leading human rights activist, was similarly arrested in February 2007 and imprisoned for nine months, actions believed to be a reprisal for his father's human rights work. Authorities have also imprisoned two of imprisoned dissident Yusuf Yumayev's sons, Bobur and Mashrab, on trumped-up charges in apparent retaliation for their father's activism.

In addition, there have been a number of attacks on human rights defenders or their family members by unidentified assailants who are rarely, if ever, held to account, raising concern that these attacks are at a minimum tolerated, if not encouraged, by the government. Just days after the above described attack on Urlaeva in April 2009, her 5-year-old son was the target of a vicious attack by an unknown assailant who beat him repeatedly in the head with a stick, causing him to be hospitalized with a concussion. Although the police promised to investigate both incidents, the status of the investigations is unclear, and to date the perpetrators have not been brought to justice.

The government also continues to place undue restrictions on the operation of international NGOs, and has refused to allow any of the previously expelled foreign NGOs to return to the country, although at least two of them attempted to do so in 2008 alone. Human Rights Watch itself was forced to suspend its operations in Uzbekistan in July 2008 after the government denied work accreditation to, and then outright banned its researcher from entering the country. The move followed on the heels of multiple prior attempts on the part of the Uzbek government to obstruct Human Rights Watch's work on Uzbekistan. Since 2004, all staff in Human Rights Watch's Tashkent office, comprised of different nationalities and professional backgrounds, faced sustained and intensifying government obstruction of their work, including repeated delays in decisions on, or denials of, visas and/or accreditation.

⁴ For more details on these incidents, see <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/05/29/uzbekistan-stop-detention-harassment-activists> and <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/04/16/uzbekistan-rights-defender-attacked-threatened>.

Torture and ill-treatment (Covenant articles 2, 7, 10, 14)

Torture and ill-treatment are endemic to the criminal justice system in Uzbekistan.⁵ Authorities have failed to take effective action to address the culture of impunity for torture, highlighted by the UN Committee Against Torture in its November 2007 examination of Uzbekistan as a key obstacle to effectively combating it. The government has also persistently failed to fully implement the 2003 recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on torture.

As a result, torture remains rampant despite the much-hailed habeas corpus legislation that entered into force in January 2008. Indeed, to make habeas corpus effective it is necessary to implement a number of other reforms guaranteeing the independence of the judiciary, which is sorely lacking in Uzbekistan. According to Uzbek lawyers interviewed by Human Rights Watch, the habeas corpus reform remains largely a formality with little practical effect on the rights of the defendant, and it fails to serve as a mechanism for preventing or ending torture and ill-treatment in detention.

Human Rights Watch continues to receive credible reports of torture and ill-treatment, particularly during pre-trial detention, while judges continue to ignore allegations of torture brought forward by defendants and refuse to initiate investigations into such claims. For example, one of the aforementioned independent journalists arrested this year, Kushodbek Usmonov, who is 67 years old, testified during his trial in March 2009 that he had been subjected to torture and ill-treatment, including being beaten with hard objects in the groin and abdomen and being forced to lie naked face down and being threatened with rape if he did not confess his guilt. The judge reportedly ignored these allegations.

Imprisoned human rights defender Akzam Turgunov is another case in point; on July 14, 2008, three days after his arrest, while in a police investigator's office writing a statement, someone poured boiling water down his neck and back, severely scalding him and causing him to lose consciousness. The authorities refused to investigate the abuse until Turgunov removed his shirt to reveal his burn scars during a court hearing in September 2008. The investigation concluded that his burns were minor and did not warrant any action. Turgunov, 57 years of age, was sentenced on October 23, 2008 to ten years in prison following a trial that manifestly violated fair trial standards.

Another distinct concern relating to torture and ill-treatment in Uzbekistan is that of Uzbek refugees and asylum seekers in neighboring countries whose forcible return the Uzbek

⁵ For a more detailed analysis on torture and ill-treatment in Uzbekistan, see Human Rights Watch's November 2007 report, "Nowhere to Turn: Torture and Ill-Treatment in Uzbekistan," at <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2007/11/05/nowhere-turn>.

government actively seeks, often successfully, despite the serious risk of torture and ill-treatment they face upon return. Uzbek refugees in Kyrgyzstan appear particularly vulnerable, with more than a dozen forcibly returned to Uzbekistan since 2005. Human Rights Watch documented at least two such cases in the past year—of Erkin Holikov, handed over to Uzbek authorities in May 2008 despite having a pending asylum claim, and Haiotjon Juraboev, a UNHCR recognized refugee who was apparently stopped in Bishkek in September 2008 by unknown individuals whom witnesses said introduced themselves as security officials, only to emerge in an Uzbek prison several months later.⁶ Juraboev was sentenced to a 13-year prison term in February 2009.

Repression of media freedoms (Covenant article 19)

Despite legislation outlawing censorship and ensuring freedom of speech, in practice, censorship is the norm and freedom of expression is severely limited in Uzbekistan. Independent media is tightly controlled and the few journalists who continue to work in the country do so at great risk to themselves, forced to self-censor due to harassment, beatings, detention, and threats of imprisonment for their critical views of the government.

As noted above, the government continues to hold a number of independent journalists on politically motivated charges. Among them is Jamshid Karimov, involuntarily held in a closed psychiatric ward since September 2006 for what many believe is retribution for publishing articles on the internet that were critical of the government. In the last year alone at least three journalists have been prosecuted and sentenced to imprisonment on trumped-up charges – Solijon Abdurakhmanov, arrested in June 2008 and sentenced in October 2008 to ten years in prison for selling drugs, Dilmurod Saidov, arrested in February 2009 and on trial at this writing on extortion charges, and Kushodbek Usmonov, arrested in January 2009 and sentenced in March to a six-month prison term for insult and libel.

Foreign correspondents and Uzbek citizens working for foreign media are not allowed to operate without accreditation – currently there are only a handful of accredited foreign correspondents in Uzbekistan and no foreign journalists working for Western media outlets. International news bureaus such as BBC, RFE/RL, Deutsche Welle, and the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) have been repeatedly refused re-accreditation. Websites that carry articles critical of the government are routinely blocked within Uzbekistan, making access to international news and human rights websites extremely limited.

⁶ For more details on these cases, see <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/02/05/uzbekistan-abducted-refugee-trial> and <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2008/05/12/kyrgyzstan-do-not-return-asylum-seeker-uzbekistan>.

Religious persecution (Covenant article 7, 10, 18)

Authorities in Uzbekistan continue their unrelenting, multi-year campaign of arbitrary detention and ill-treatment and torture of Muslims who practice their faith outside state controls or who belong to unregistered religious organizations, with thousands incarcerated for non-violent offenses. Peaceful religious believers are often branded “extremists,” with dozens of new arrests and convictions on charges related to extremism each year. Human Rights Watch has documented allegations of ill-treatment in a number of these cases.

In a worrisome trend that appears to be designed to keep religious prisoners incarcerated beyond their original sentences, authorities frequently initiate new criminal proceedings against such prisoners, often just weeks before their terms expire, for alleged violations of prison regulations such as refusing to attend breakfast, failure to shave and maintain adequate personal hygiene, or disobeying orders of prison staff. Prisoners subject to such proceedings are not afforded adequate due process rights or a meaningful opportunity to challenge the accusations mounted against them, and can easily end up having their prison sentences extended by three years or more.

Forced child labor in the cotton industry (Covenant article 8)

The widespread use of government-sponsored forced child labor to collect the annual cotton harvest remains a key human rights concern in Uzbekistan, despite the entry into force of a new law on children’s rights in January 2008 and the government’s ratification of the International Labor Organization’s Conventions on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor and on the Minimum Age of Employment in March 2008. A related issue of great concern is the risk of harassment and detention facing human rights defenders seeking to document and report on forced child labor. Human Rights Watch is aware of several cases in which local authorities have harassed and threatened activists after learning about their attempts to document the use of forced child labor.

Key concerns flowing from the above overview which Human Rights Watch would hope to see reflected in the Committee’s review of Uzbekistan:

- The lack of accountability for the Andijan massacre and the continued harassment and other abuses of returned refugees and families of refugees who remain abroad;
- The wrongful imprisonment human rights defenders, journalists, members of the political opposition and other activists held on politically motivated charges;

- The government crackdown on civil society targeting both domestic and international human rights groups, and harassment and intimidation of civil society activists;
- Torture and ill-treatment and the accompanying culture of impunity, including the government's failure to implement in full the recommendations of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture and Committee Against Torture;
- Repression of media freedoms, including harassment of journalists and refusal to register and grant accreditation to domestic and international media outlets;
- Religious persecution, including the criminalization of peaceful religious activity and the imprisonment of thousands of people for their nonviolent religious expression;
- Forced child labor in the cotton sector and the refusal to allow independent monitoring or to involve independent nongovernmental organizations in assessments of child welfare, particularly as they relate to the cotton sector;
- Failure to ensure unhindered access for independent monitors, including UN special procedures that have been unable to visit due to the government's refusal to issue the required invitations, and failure to implement recommendations by independent monitoring bodies, including UN treaty bodies and special procedures.

For further reference, please find below the link to Human Rights Watch's country page on Uzbekistan: <http://www.hrw.org/en/europecentral-asia/uzbekistan>.

Annex: Imprisoned Uzbek Human Rights Defenders and Activists

The following is a non-exhaustive list of imprisoned human rights defenders in Uzbekistan whose cases Human Rights Watch follows closely. Many other activists – defenders, independent journalists, and dissidents – are behind bars on politically motivated charges, including **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, Yusuf Jumaev continues to suffer ill-treatment in prison and is in very poor health. He is held at Jaslyk, a prison so notorious for its harsh conditions that the UN Special Rapporteur on torture recommended it be closed down.

Authorities have also imprisoned Jumaev’s sons **Mashrab Jumaev** and **Bobur Jumaev**, in apparent retaliation for their father’s activism. In a deeply disconcerting development, Mashrab was last seen by his family in May 2008, at which time he was reportedly in very poor health. A local televised news program reported in June 2008 that he had escaped from prison, but to this date his whereabouts are unknown and his family fears for his safety.

Another prominent political prisoner is **Sanjar Umarov**, leader of the independent political movement “Sunshine Coalition,” who was convicted in March 2006 on charges that appear to be politically motivated. Umarov’s mental and physical health is in grave danger. According to his family, he was weak, emaciated, and unable to communicate during a visit in November 2008.

While human rights defender **Mutabar Tojibaeva’s** release on parole in June 2008 was a welcome step, authorities have not acquitted her. She is currently in France receiving medical treatment.

1. Azam Formonov and 2. Alisher Karamatov

Formonov and Karamatov were active members of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan in Gulistan, in Syrdaryo province. Police arrested them on April 29, 2006, and they were charged with attempting to blackmail a local businessman. They were tried at the Yangier City Court without the presence of either their attorney of choice or their non-attorney public defender, Tolib Yakubov, chair of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan who now lives in exile. They were each sentenced to nine years in prison on June 15, 2006. A week before the sentencing, in a private conversation at the prison with Mr. Yakubov, the men described how they were tortured and pressured into signing false confessions. Formonov is currently held

at Jaslyk prison, in violation of the terms of his verdict, which specified that he be put into a 'general' regime prison (Jaslyk prison is 'severe' regime and so notorious for its harsh conditions that the UN Special Rapporteur for Torture following his visit to Uzbekistan recommended that it be closed down).

According to Ozoda Yakubova, Formonov's wife, the head of the prison summoned Formonov to his office and ordered him to sign a statement testifying that he had committed "violations of the regime" and would not be eligible for amnesty. His wife told HRW that he initially refused, but after being tortured, he relented and gave the authorities his signature. Formonov has been repeatedly placed into a punishment cell for "breaking prison rules." One such rule was "helping prisoners write appeals" although Formonov was never in possession of a pen and at most, only spoke to others about how to appeal their prison sentences. On January 8, 2008, Formonov was reportedly stripped of his overclothing, handcuffed and put into an unheated punishment cell for 15 days. In January 2008, temperatures in Uzbekistan reached approximately -20 C.

Karamatov was held in prison in Karshi until his health deteriorated to such an extent in mid-October 2008 that he was transferred to a prison hospital. According to Karamatov's family, who saw him in mid-November, Karamatov was very weak, coughing blood, and had lost nearly half his body weight. Prison doctors diagnosed him with a severe form of tuberculosis.

Prison officials accused Karamatov of violating internal prison rules to render him ineligible for amnesty or early release. For example, according to his wife, on December 30, 2008, Karamatov was accused of breaching prison rules (in this case, allegedly saying prayers). When he refused to sign the document attesting a breach of internal order and said that he would complain to the public prosecutor, the prison guards reportedly escorted him outside, took off his hat and jersey, and made him stand in the freezing temperatures for nearly four hours in order to force Karamatov to sign the document. In March 2009, Karamatov's wife reported that yet another charge of breaching internal order had been brought against him.

According to Karamatov's family, following increased attention to his deteriorating health, beginning in mid-February 2009, Karamatov started receiving proper medical attention and tuberculosis treatment. His family reports that he has since gained about 40 kilograms and is in much better health.

3. Jamshid Karimov

Karimov is an independent journalist from Jizzakh and vocal critic of the government's policies who regularly published articles on the internet. On September 12, 2006 he

disappeared after visiting his mother at the Jizzakh Province Hospital. Soon thereafter Karimov was forcibly admitted to the Samarkand Psychiatric Hospital where according to unconfirmed rumors, he was subjected to forcible treatment with antipsychotic drugs. There is no medical basis for Karimov's confinement or treatment and authorities continue to demand that he denounce his journalistic activities. In September 2007, Karimov informed Bakhtiyor Khamraev, a fellow human rights defender, that a commission was going to visit him to consider his release. Human Rights Watch has not been able to confirm whether there was such a visit, but to date, Karimov remains in psychiatric detention.

Human Rights Watch has received worrying reports indicating that Karimov's family has been intimidated by the authorities and warned not to speak with anyone about Karimov's 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 had been instructed not to contact anyone outside the immediate family during this time.

4. Norboi Kholjigitov

Kholjigitov, 60 years of age, 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. Police arrested Kholjigitov on June 4, 2005, on the basis of statements accusing him of threatening to publicly blackmail business owners if they did not buy his silence. At his trial, these statements were retracted. The judge, however, did not account for this change in testimony, and on October 18, 2005, sentenced Kholjigitov to ten years in prison for extortion and slander.

Local human rights groups report that Norboi Kholjigitov's health has dramatically deteriorated over the last year and he is in need of medical assessment and treatment. On September 17, 2008, Kholjigitov's lawyer Abdulla Mukhammadjonov saw Kholjigitov in prison No. 64/51, where he had been temporarily transferred from his regular prison No. 64/49. According to Mukhammadjonov, prison authorities continued to accuse him of administrative violations. Such violations can delay his release and render him ineligible for parole. Mukhammadjonov is currently preparing an appeal to be filed with the Supreme Court of Uzbekistan.

According to Kholjigitov's family who visited him in September and December 2008, and again in March 2009, Kholjigitov's health has deteriorated markedly. Kholjigitov, who suffers from diabetes, has partially lost control of his right arm and leg due to complications from diabetes and is unable to walk. As of December 2008 Kholjigitov had apparently lost all but

one of his teeth and his wife estimates that he has lost about 35 kilograms since his imprisonment. He is in urgent need of appropriate medical care.

Kholjigitov has also 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.

5. Abdusattor Irzaev and 6. Habibulla Okpulatov

Irzaev and Okpulatov are both members of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan working as, respectively, the director and a teacher of a school in Samarkand. They were tried together with Kholjigitov in October 2005 and sentenced to 6 years in prison by the Samarkand regional court.

Okpulatov is held in Navoi prison No. 64/29. Relatives who visited him on March 29, 2009 found him in very poor health. His right leg was practically incapacitated and both eyes visibly infected. Okpulatov is in urgent need of medical care.

7. Nosim Isakov

Isakov was active with the Jizzakh city branch of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan. He was arrested on October 27, 2005, and charged with hooliganism on the basis of a written complaint stating that he exposed himself in public to his neighbor's teenage daughter. Isakov's supporters found the accusation particularly shocking and offensive because he is a pious Muslim. At his trial, which began December 15, 2005, Isakov did not confess 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 sentenced to eight years in prison. Isakov is being held at Karshi prison.

8. Rasul Khudainasarov

Khudainasarov is the head of the Angren branch of the human rights organization Ezgulik and has focused his work on fighting corruption in the police and security forces. He was arrested on July 21, 2005. On January 12, 2006 he was sentenced to nine and a half years in prison on charges of extortion, swindling, abuse of power, and falsification of documents. Khudainasarov wrote a letter to his lawyer complaining 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 on January 13, one day after the verdict was issued, in retribution for not confessing during the trial. Khudainasarov is currently being held at Prison 64/21 in Begabat, not far from Tashkent.

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 gone on a temporary hunger strike to protest his ill-treatment. According to his wife, Khudainasarov made a suicide attempt in fall 2008 and was rescued by fellow inmates.

9. Yuldash Rasulov

Rasulov has been a member of the Kashkadaria branch of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan (HRSU) since 2002. He has 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 at the end of April 2007 and in October 2007 was sentenced to 10 years in prison on charges that included alleged anti-constitutional activity. He is being held in prison colony No. 64/25 in Karabulbazar in the Bukhara region.

10. Solijon Abdurakhmanov

Abdurakhmanov is a Karakalpakstan-based 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, 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 found 114.18 g of marijuana and 5.89 g of opium 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 is representing him at this trial, believes that the police planted the drugs. The investigators failed to carry out basic investigative steps such as checking the drugs for fingerprints despite repeated requests by Abdurakhmanov and his lawyer. Authorities initially charged Abdurakhmanov with drug possession, but after the investigators determined that Abdurakhmanov does not use drugs, they charged him with selling drugs instead, a more serious charge punishable by up to 20 years of imprisonment.

The September trial against Abdurakhmanov, failed to meet fair trial standards. The court in Nukus, sentenced Abdurakhmanov to 10 years in prison and this sentence has been upheld on appeal by two instances. Abdurakhmanov's lawyer and brother is being hampered in filing a last instance appeal with the Supreme Court of Uzbekistan because of an ongoing,

mandatory re-licensing process for all Uzbek lawyers that the authorities appear to have misused to revoke his license. Abdurakhmanov is held in prison colony 64/61 in Karshi.

11. Akzam Turgunov

Turgunov founded and heads 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. In the months leading up to his arrest in July 2008, Turgunov had been working in Karakalpakstan as a public defender in a number of sensitive cases.

In 1998, Turgunov was sentenced to six years in prison on politically motivated charges of “abuse of office” and “official negligence,” related to his work on his neighborhood committee to set up private alternatives to services that are supposed to be provided by the state. He was released under an amnesty in May 2000.

Arrested on July 11, 2008 in Karakalpakstan and accused of extortion on fabricated charges, Turgunov is currently in detention and the trial against him is underway. Serious due process violations during the investigation and proceedings undermine Turgunov’s right to a fair and impartial trial. Turgunov has also told his lawyer that he suffered ill-treatment in custody. On July 14, he was taken from a police cell to an investigator’s office to write a statement. He told his lawyer that, while he was in the office, someone poured boiling water down his neck and back, causing severe burns and causing Turgunov to lose consciousness. The lawyer, Rustam Tulyaganov, told Human Rights Watch that he observed burns on Turgunov’s body and that marks were still evident during the trial hearing on September 16. Tulyaganov submitted a request to the Prosecutor’s Office on July 22 for an investigation into the ill-treatment, but received no reply. In his court hearing on September 16, Turgunov removed his shirt to show the burn scars, which covered a large portion of his back and neck. After viewing the burn marks, the judge ordered a forensic medical exam, which occurred on September 22. The exam concluded that his burns were minor and did not warrant any action.

The Amudarinskii court in Manget, Karakalpakstan, sentenced Turgunov to 10 years in prison on October 23, 2008. This sentence has been upheld on appeal and like Abdurakhmanov, Turgunov was in the process of preparing his last instance appeal with the Supreme Court of Uzbekistan when his lawyer, Rustam Tulyaganov, lost his license as part of the government-run re-licensing procedure.

Turgunov's son, Murat, visited his father on May 25, 2009 and told Human Rights Watch that his father had lost a significant amount of weight and was in very bad health. Turgunov, 57 years old, is reportedly forced to work 12 hours shifts at a brick factory, and complained of severe leg pain as a result of this work, for which he is not given appropriate treatment.

At the end of 2008 Turgunov was apparently transferred without warning or explanation to Jaslyk prison, notorious for its harsh conditions, where he endured regular beatings. After roughly one month he was transferred back to the prison colony in Karshi where he continues to serve his sentence.

12. Kushodbek Usmonov

Usmonov, 67 years old, is a member of Ezgulik in the Andijan region. He was arrested on January 13, 2009 by police officers in Asaka, Andijan, initially on charges of hooliganism allegedly brought forward by Usmonov's nephew. Subsequently the authorities changed the charges to libel and insult, without explaining the reasons or specifying the details of when and against whom the alleged libel and insult took place. It is believed that Usmonov was prosecuted in retribution for writing several articles criticizing police officers and other high-ranking officials.

Usmonov was sentenced on March 18, 2009 to a six-month prison term. During the trial Usmonov testified that he had been subjected to torture and ill-treatment, including being beaten with hard objects in the groin and abdomen, and being forced to lie naked face down and being threatened with rape if he did not confess his guilt. Usmonov reportedly submitted statements about his treatment to the prosecutor general, but received no response. The judge at trial also ignored his statement and did not order an investigation into the alleged torture and ill-treatment.

On May 11, 2009, Usmonov's sentence was upheld on appeal. He is currently being held in Andijan prison and is due to be released on July 13, 2009.

13. Dilmurod Saidov

Saidov is an independent journalist and member of the human rights group Ezgulik. According to his colleagues, Saidov's human rights work involved, among others, helping farmers defend their rights in the Samarkand region. Saidov was arrested in Tashkent on February 22, 2009, by the General Prosecutor's Office Department of Tax and Foreign Currency Violations, apparently for complicity in extortion. Observers believe that the real reason for his arrest was his investigations of corruption and violations by the officials of Djumbay district of Samarkand region.

Following a hearing held on February 25, 2009, the Samarkand city court ruled that Saidov be held in custody. His lawyer was not informed of the hearing on time and was not present. During the hearing, a woman who was initially put forward by the prosecution as a witness to the alleged extortion made an official statement that she had never met Saidov before. Saidov has issued a statement from prison insisting on his innocence. Human Rights Watch shares Ezgulik's concern that Saidov is being prosecuted in retribution for uncovering corruption-related abuses by regional officials.

Saidov's trial began on June 1, 2009, at the Tailak regional court. Saidov is being tried along with three others whom the prosecution alleges organized the extortion, amounting to \$15,000. A second hearing scheduled for June 4, 2009 was postponed because a prosecutor apparently failed to appear in court. The next hearing is scheduled to take place on June 9, 2009.