

Worldwide appeals August 2002
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China

Uighur historian behind bars

Tohti Tunyaz, an ethnic Uighur from the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in the northwest of China, is serving an 11-year prison sentence because of his research into Uighur history. He is a prisoner of conscience.

Tohti Tunyaz (who writes as Tohti Muzart) is a postgraduate student in Japan specializing in the history of Chinese government policy towards minority groups.

He was arrested in February 1998 during a visit to the XUAR to research his thesis. He was charged with "inciting separatism" and "illegally acquiring state secrets".

Tohti Tunyaz was convicted in March 1999 by the Urumqi Intermediate People's Court, and his conviction and sentence were confirmed on appeal in March 2000.

During his trial the court referred to documents he obtained in the XUAR, and to a book advocating "ethnic separatism" which he was accused of publishing in Japan.

His professor in Japan, Sato Tsugitaka, has asserted strongly that the so-called "state secrets" consisted of a list of 50-year-old documents provided by an official librarian, and that Tohti Tunyaz has not published any books advocating "ethnic separatism".

The imprisonment of Tohti Tunyaz comes at a time of increased government repression in the XUAR, particularly affecting the mainly Muslim Uighur population.

Following the 11 September 2001 attacks in the USA, China has intensified its political crack-down by closing down mosques, burning Uighur books and branding those in favour of independence for the region as "ethnic separatists" or "terrorists".

In May 2001, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention concluded that Tohti Tunyaz' imprisonment was arbitrary and in violation of his right to freedom of thought, expression and opinion. Please write, urging the Chinese authorities to release Tohti Tunyaz immediately and unconditionally, and to ensure that everyone in the XUAR has the right to freedom of expression regardless of race, religion or political opinion. Send appeals to: Abdulahat Abdurixit, Chair of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region People's Government, Xinjiang Weiwuer Zizhiqu Renmin Zhengfu, 2 Zhongshanlu, Wulumuqishi 830041, Xinjiang Weiwuer Zizhiqu, People's Republic of China. Telegram: Chair of Regional Government, Wulumuqishi, Xinjiang, China.

Ukraine

Fear of reprisal beatings by police

A group of masked police officers reportedly entered a prison cell and beat 19-year-old Timur Flores Lopez in front of about 30 other prisoners, on 14 June 2002. Police in the city of Vinnytsa were under investigation because Timur Flores Lopez had accused them of torturing him in September 2000.

The police officers, who had reportedly been allowed into Prison No.1 by prison officials, allegedly beat Timur Flores Lopez then put him in a small isolation cell or "cooler". AI believes that their motive was to punish him and deter him from pursuing the complaint of torture and ill-treatment he has made against the local police.

These allegations arose from Timur Flores Lopez' treatment by police officers in September 2000. Aged 17, he was detained on suspicion of theft and allegedly tortured to elicit a "confession", which was used to secure his conviction during his trial. He was sentenced to five years' imprisonment for theft in November 2001.

AI called on the Ukrainian authorities to investigate these serious allegations, and, as a result, the Human Rights Ombudsperson's Office intervened in the case. In April 2002, an appeals court in

Vinnytsa overturned his conviction and sent the case for further investigation. AI believes that Timur Flores Lopez is at serious risk of further torture and ill-treatment because of this investigation. Please write, expressing concern about Timur Flores Lopez' alleged ill-treatment on 14 June 2002 and calling on the Ukrainian authorities to take immediate steps to guarantee his safety and ensure that he is not subjected to any further reprisals. Urge the authorities to carry out a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation into the allegations that Timur Flores Lopez' November 2001 conviction was based on a forced "confession". Send appeals to: Prosecutor General Nikolai Garnik, ul. Reznitskaya 13/15, 252601 Kyiv-II, Ukraine. Fax: + 380 44 290 2603.

Trinidad and Tobago

Authorities fail to investigate death in custody

Anton Cooper's dead body was found naked and wet in his cell in the early hours of 26 June 2001 just 24 hours after he was taken into custody. His body bore the signs of a severe beating, and the cause of death was declared as "asphyxia associated with multiple blunt traumatic injuries". Other prisoners at the Golden Grove Remand Centre reported seeing him being brutally beaten by prison guards. Several are prepared to risk reprisals and testify in court to what they saw.

Rhonda Kernahan, Anton Cooper's sister, saw his body before his burial and observed gaping wounds at the back of his head, a cut on his face, bruises under his eyes, hands and legs and his penis was swollen. The family is convinced these injuries could not have been self-inflicted.

Following Anton Cooper's death, the acting Commissioner of Prisons publicly promised that a senior prison officer would undertake an investigation into the matter, but maintained that prison officers did not beat him. To date, neither a full pathologist's report nor the findings of any investigation have been made public, despite widespread concern in the media and other sectors of society.

Please write, calling for a thorough, prompt and impartial investigation into the death of Anton Cooper to bring those responsible to justice. Send appeals to: Mr Hilton Guy, Commissioner of Police, Police Administration Building, Sackville Street, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. Fax: +1 868 623 2585.