

PUBLIC

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Fear of torture or ill-treatment/Prisoner of conscience/  
Incommunicado detention

29 July 2005

**UZBEKISTAN Erkin Yakubzhanov (m), aged 26, journalist**

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Prisoner of conscience Erkin Yakubzhanov was reportedly detained by Uzbekistani border guards on 18 July in the town of Dustlik, which borders Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. He was reportedly moved from Dustlik to Andizhan and subsequently transferred to the capital Tashkent. He is now being held in incommunicado detention at an unknown location in Tashkent, where he is in serious danger of torture or other ill-treatment.

Erkin Yakubzhanov is a journalism student at Osh State University and has a wife and a son. He was working as a freelancer for the radio station network *Dolina Mira* (Valley of Peace), which is part of a project run by an international media support group in Denmark. He was arrested as he investigated repression in Andizhan and the impact on the region of the events of 13 May, which culminated in the Uzbekistani security forces allegedly firing indiscriminately into a crowd of thousands of mainly unarmed and peaceful demonstrators.

Erkin Yakubzhanov was apparently arrested as he tried to interview border guards in Dustlik. It is believed that they thought he was a journalist for the Uzbek service of *Radio Free Europe (Radio Ozodlik)* and that he did not have accreditation to work in Uzbekistan.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Hundreds of people fled the Uzbekistani city of Andizhan after government troops reportedly fired on thousands of mainly unarmed and peaceful demonstrators on 13 May. Hundreds left the country and sought international protection in neighbouring Kyrgyzstan.

Since the 13 May uprising, a number of journalists have been targeted and harassed by the authorities. Freedom of expression is under threat in Uzbekistan and journalists have been prevented from doing their job and disseminating information. Amnesty International is concerned that the Uzbekistani authorities have tried to control the flow of information about events in Andizhan, by both censoring any reports by Uzbekistani media outlets that did not follow the official line and blocking access to foreign media in Uzbekistan.

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Russian, English, Uzbek or your own language:**

- expressing concern for the safety of Erkin Yakubzhanov and calling for guarantees that he will not be tortured or ill-treated in detention;
- stating that Amnesty International considers Erkin Yakubzhanov to be a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely for carrying out his peaceful and legitimate work, and calling for his immediate release;
- urging the Uzbekistani authorities to ensure that Erkin Yakubzhanov is given access to a lawyer of his choice and to his relatives and that he receives any necessary medical attention.

#### **APPEALS TO: (Please note that it can be difficult to get through to fax numbers in Uzbekistan. If a voice answers please repeat "fax" until the fax is switched on. Fax machines can be switched off outside office hours. 5 hours ahead of GMT)**

President

Islam A. KARIMOV,

Rezidentsia prezidenta; ul. Uzbekistanskaia, 43, Tashkent 700163; UZBEKISTAN

**Fax:** + 998 71 139 53 25

**Email:** [presidents\\_office@press-service.uz](mailto:presidents_office@press-service.uz)

**Salutation: Dear President Karimov**

Minister of Internal Affairs

Zakirzhan ALMATOV

Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del RU, ul. Novruz, 1, Tashkent 700029; UZBEKISTAN

**Fax: + 998 71 133 89 34**

**Salutation: Dear Minister Almatov**

General Procurator of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Rashidzhon KODIROV

Prokuratura Respubliki Uzbekistan, ul. Gulyamova, 66, 700047 g. Tashkent, UZBEKISTAN

**Fax: + 998 71 133 39 17/ 133 73 68**

**E-mail: prokuratura@lawyer.com**

**Salutation: Dear Procurator General**

**COPIES TO:**

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Elior GANIEV, Ministerstvo inostrannykh del RU, pl. Mustakillik, 5, Tashkent 700029, UZBEKISTAN

**Fax: + 998 71 139 15 17**

**Email: letter@mfa.uz or rnews@mfa.uz**

**Salutation: Dear Minister Ganiev**

Ombudsperson

Sayora RASHIDOVA (Ms), Oliy Majlis Commissioner for Human Rights; ul. Xalqlar Do'stligi, 1, Tashkent 700035, UZBEKISTAN

**Fax: + 998 71 139 85 55**

**E-mail: office@ombudsman.gov.uz**

**Salutation: Dear Sayora RASHIDOVA**

and to diplomatic representatives of Uzbekistan accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 9 September 2005.