

**Recommendations to the Government of
Uzbekistan
on the occasion of the
3rd Universal Periodic Review Session, December
2008**

1. Right to life, liberty and security of person

FIDH reiterates its concerns about the lack of any independent commission of inquiry into the incidents of 13-14 May 2005 in Andijan where several hundreds of people, including women and children, have lost their lives.

Also, FIDH remains concerned about persistent reports on the systematic and widespread use of torture received from HRSU (Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan) and BHRRL (Bureau on Human Rights and Rule of Law). One such recent report concerns Mr. Akzam Turgunov: on 14 July 2008, during his detention in the Nukus town police detention centre, he was taken to an investigator's office and boiling water was poured down his neck and back, causing severe burns.

Moreover, conditions of detention in the country remain of a particular concern. In mid-May 2008, the relatives of the dissident and poet Yusuf Jumaev informed FIDH that he was being ill-treated and denied necessary medical care.

FIDH calls upon the Uzbek authorities to fully follow the conclusions and recommendations adopted by the **Committee against Torture (CAT)** on 22 November 2007, including, to :

- **Institute a full, effective, impartial inquiry into the May 2005 events at Andijan;**
- **Apply a zero-tolerance approach to the continuing problem of torture, and to the practice of impunity;**
- **Take effective measures to keep under systematic review all places of detention, and not to impede routine unannounced visits by independent experts, including independent national and international bodies, to all places of detention.**

2. Human Rights Defenders

FIDH commends the release of several human rights defenders in recent months (notably that of Mrs. Mutabar Tojibaeva in June 2008). However, FIDH remains extremely concerned by the continuous detention and for the welfare of human rights defenders in Uzbekistan, including nine representatives of its member organisation HRSU.

FIDH is also concerned by recent arrests and arbitrary condemnations (notably that of Mr. Akzam Turgunov, executive director and founder of "Mazlum" Human rights organisation, who was arrested on suspicion of extortion of money, under circumstances that seemed to have been staged to frame him and sanction him for his human rights activities, and sentenced on 23 October 2008 to a 10-year prison term).

Therefore, FIDH calls upon the Uzbek authorities to:

- **Release immediately and unconditionally the human rights defenders: Abdurasul Abdunazarov, Norboy Kholjigitov, Abdulsattor Irzaev, Habibulla Okpulatov, Nasim Isakov, Azam Formonov, Alisher Karamatov, Djamshid Karimov, Yuldash Rasulev, Zafar Rakhimov, Yusuf Jumaev, Solijon Abdurahmonov, Akzam Turgunov;**
- **Put an immediate end to harassments and arbitrary detentions of Human Rights Defenders in Uzbekistan;**
- **Issue an invitation to the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, as well as the Special Rapporteur on Torture and the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders;**
- **Fully comply with its international obligations and take effective measures to ensure that human rights defenders are able to exercise their rights to freedom of expression and assembly, including carrying out their peaceful activities, and be protected from harassment by law enforcement authorities; in conformity with the provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 9 December 1998.**

3. Freedom of expression

Media in Uzbekistan still work in a tightly controlled and censored environment. A number of journalists are serving long prison sentences as a result of their professional activities. New arrests have taken place recently: on 10 October 2008, Mr. Solijon Abdurakhmanov, a journalist known for his critical reporting of the local authorities was sentenced to ten years of prison, officially on charges of selling drugs. The media are kept under the tight control of the government: as a recent example we can mention the EU-Uzbekistan sponsored seminar in October 2008 on media freedom that FIDH attended. FIDH could observe that foreign journalists and independent journalists were not able to cover the event.

FIDH calls upon the Uzbek authorities to:

- **Fully comply with article 19 of ICCPR, to which Uzbekistan is a party, by respecting the right to Freedom of expression;**
- **End state censorship of all forms of protected expression;**
- **Lift reporting restrictions on all domestic and international media outlets;**
- **Cease harassment and intimidation of independent journalists working in the country;**
- **Promptly and unconditionally release journalists wrongfully detained for their professional activities and other persons detained for exercising their freedom of expression;**
- **Require public trials in line with Article 11 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, by allowing Uzbek and foreign journalists and other independent monitors to cover criminal proceedings from inside the courtrooms;**
- **Issue an invitation to the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, as well as the Special Rapporteur on Torture and the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders.**

4. Freedom of movement

Uzbek citizens wishing to travel out of the country need to obtain permission to do so (a so-called « exit visa ») from the Ministry of the Interior. « Exit visas » are regularly refused to human rights activists, representatives of the political opposition and journalists. Mr. Kamil Ashurov, for instance, a journalist and human rights defender, has been repeatedly denied such an exit visa and can not travel abroad as a result. Moreover, the existing compulsory residence registration system limits the free movement of people on Uzbek territory.

Our organisation calls upon the Uzbek authorities **to harmonize their national legislation according to article 12 of ICCPR**, which Uzbekistan ratified, namely:

- **Allow its citizens to move freely and freely choose their place of residence;**
- **Allow its citizens to freely leave the country.**

5. Rights of the Child

FIDH welcomes the ratification of the ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour by Uzbekistan in June 2008, its declared intention to ratify ILO Convention 138 on Minimum Age and

the Uzbek Government decree adopted in September 2008 banning the use of all forms of child labour. However, according to information received from “Human Rights in Central Asia”, children are still forcibly taking part in the 2008 cotton harvests.

FIDH calls upon the Uzbek authorities:

- **To fully enforce ILO Convention 182;**
- **To address all areas of concern and recommendations listed in the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2 June 2006).**