

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/uzbekistan-sham-trial-ends-in-heavy-fine-for-01-07-2014,46564.html>

---

Europe/Ex-USSR - Uzbekistan

Call to order

## Sham trial ends in heavy fine for well-known freelancer

1 July 2014

---

Rigged evidence used to send a new warning to the few remaining independent journalists

[Well-known](#) freelance journalist **Said Abdurakhimov**'s conviction has reminded Uzbekistan's media personnel yet again that they are subject to completely arbitrary rule.

At the end of a summary trial on 28 June, a Tashkent court [fined](#) Abdurakhimov 9.6 million soms (2,400 euros on the black market) on charges of working "without accreditation" and "threatening social order" for writing about people who were evicted without compensation to make room for a motorway.

The fine is the equivalent of [several months' salary](#) in Uzbekistan.

Abdurakhimov, who writes under the pseudonym of **Sid Yanyshv** (Сид Янышев), was convicted under articles 165 and 184 of the code of administrative offenses of working as a journalist "without a licence or permit" and "preparing or keeping information representing a threat to public security and order, with the aim of disseminating it." His camera was also confiscated.

The trial followed [his interrogation](#) on 26 June about [an article](#) he wrote a month ago for the Moscow-based independent news website [Ferghana](#) (access to which is blocked inside Uzbekistan). It described the distress of residents of a Tashkent district who have not been compensated for homes that are being demolished so that a new motorway can be built.

*"This travesty of a trial was the work of a judicial system that follows orders and is more concerned about protecting the authorities than defending wronged citizens,"* said Johann Bihr, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Eastern Europe and Central Asia desk.

*"It is intended to deliver a new warning to the few remaining independent journalists who continue to work in Uzbekistan despite all the problems. We call on the courts to overturn this iniquitous verdict, which violates the Uzbek constitution and international agreements signed by Uzbekistan."*

Held on Uzbekistan's national day for journalists, the trial was marked by many [procedural irregularities](#). The two lawyers appointed by the court to represent Abdurakhimov made no attempt to defend him. Plainclothes counter-terrorism police sat in the area of the courtroom reserved for the public.

The prosecution case was based on the testimony of five residents of the district being demolished, who accused Abdurakhimov in identical terms of reporting their statements without permission and distorting what they said.

Abdurakhimov was not allowed to show his videos of the interviews, which proved the opposite. Two of these five residents, who were also "defence witnesses," admitted after the trial that they were told what to testify. They did at least tell the court that they had not been compensated, [which prevented](#) Abdurakhimov from being convicted on additional charges of defamation or insult.

No law was cited as the basis of the charge of "working without accreditation" as a journalist. Instead, it was based on the "expert" testimony of a young employee of the state TV station *Yoshlar*, who said that "independent journalism does not exist" and that persons without accreditation cannot identify themselves as journalists and write for the media.

This testimony is contradicted by article 29 of the Uzbek constitution, which guarantees everyone's "right to gather and disseminate information."

Uzbekistan is ranked 166th out of 180 countries in the [2014 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#). The state media are subject to total censorship and there are no more than a handful of independent journalists, who mostly work for news websites based abroad such as *Ferghana*, [Uznews](#), [Radio Ozodlik](#) and [Jarayon](#).

[Nine journalists](#) are currently detained in [appalling conditions](#). Some of them have been held for [more than 15 years](#).

*(Photo: Ozodlik, photomontage : Ferghana)*

---