Karimov’s War

Human Rights Defenders and Counterterrorism in Uzbekistan

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[WEB VERSION]

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About Us
For the past quarter century, Human Rights First (formerly the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights) has worked in the United States and abroad to create a secure and humane world by advancing justice, human dignity and respect for the rule of law. We support human rights activists who fight for basic freedoms and peaceful change at the local level; protect refugees in flight from persecution and repression; help build a strong international system of justice and accountability; and make sure human rights laws and principles are enforced in the United States and abroad.

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On May 13, 2005, Uzbek government military and security forces shot and killed hundreds of unarmed civilians gathered for a protest in the eastern city of Andizhan – an extreme measure to silence growing signs of public dissent and political opposition. But while the Andizhan massacre was the most massive single act of violence committed by the government against civilians in Uzbekistan to date, it was not an isolated incident. Rather, what happened at Andizhan was part of a much broader pattern of oppression that has characterized President Islam Karimov’s long rule.

In Uzbekistan, where the flow of information is largely controlled by the government, human rights defenders play an essential role in ensuring that authorities do not perpetrate grave violations of human rights under a cloak of secrecy. But those who would investigate, monitor, and report on human rights violations have themselves been under attack. Human rights defenders in Uzbekistan are at particular risk since the events at Andizhan, though they have confronted severe challenges for many years.

In the fourteen years since its independence from the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan has prohibited the formation of independent institutions and suppressed all forms of dissent. Then in 1999, as part of its response to bombings in Tashkent that claimed more than a dozen lives, the government intensified restrictions on independent political and religious organizations. The Karimov government arrested and jailed thousands of overtly pious Muslims on suspicion of involvement in religious or political extremism or terrorism, physically mistreating or torturing many.

The authorities exploited the 1999 events as a pretext to clamp down further on their secular critics. Within the climate of public fear, human rights defenders – including independent lawyers, journalists, and activists – who criticized the government’s counterterrorism policies and the targeting of independent Muslims were themselves labeled extremists. In the context of combating the threat from terrorism, they too became the target of attacks and prosecutions.

The Karimov government adeptly took advantage of the heightened global concern over
terrorism after September 11. In a speech on September 26, President Karimov described how his many previous efforts to launch an international fight against terrorism “fell on deaf ears.” He was eager to cooperate with the United States, noting that “in light of our interest in liquidating terrorism in the region, I think that we should cooperate in actions planned by the U.S. in the fight against international terrorism, and unite with the civilized world.”\(^1\) The government of Uzbekistan was swift to identify its response to internal unrest as part of a global war on terrorism; a characterization that enabled the government to evade criticism for its brutal methods.

Many governments joined international organizations in criticizing the Karimov government for its attack on independent civic associations following the 1999 bombings.\(^2\) However, in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, governmental criticism of Uzbekistan’s human rights violations committed under the pretext of counterterrorism became much more muted.

In March 2002 the governments of the United States and Uzbekistan entered into a strategic partnership agreement in which the United States provided Uzbekistan with military aid and training, and Uzbekistan allowed the United States to make use of the Karshi-Khanabad airbase on its border with Afghanistan. The United States’ eagerness to develop a military partnership with Uzbekistan sent a clear message to President Karimov that his government’s well-documented record of serious human rights violations and suppression of basic freedoms would be largely overlooked in the name of counterterrorism.

In the months since the Andizhan massacre, important changes in Uzbekistan’s relationship with the United States, the European Union, and other governments have taken place. These changes present both new challenges and opportunities to address human rights concerns in the country. The international community must take a closer look at the context of repression in Uzbekistan – justified by the government as part of its counterterrorism efforts – in order to develop proactive strategies to improve the protection of human rights in that country.
Since June 1989, the government of Uzbekistan has been led by Islam Karimov. Karimov was at one time the leader of the People’s Democratic Party of Uzbekistan, the party that emerged from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union after Uzbek independence. On August 31, 1991, the Republic of Uzbekistan declared its independence from the former Soviet Union. Karimov became President in December 1991 in elections that were criticized as neither free nor fair: in the months leading up to these elections, freedom of speech and assembly were severely limited and most opposition parties were prohibited from nominating presidential candidates.

The only opposition party allowed to participate in the election was the Erk (Freedom) Party. Erk was formed by a group of reformists who were more willing to cooperate with the government than the Birlik (Unity) Movement, the leading opposition political party in Uzbekistan at the time. Both opposition parties were subsequently refused legal registration, and their leaders forced into exile.

In March 1992, Uzbekistan joined the United Nations. In the years following its independence, Uzbekistan became a state party to the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights as well as other principal U.N. human rights treaties. Uzbekistan also joined the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (today the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, or OSCE), and President Karimov signed the Helsinki Accords. Each of these international agreements creates binding obligations on the government of Uzbekistan regarding human rights. Furthermore, on December 8, 1992, Uzbekistan adopted a constitution that embraces basic rights and freedoms.

However, despite Uzbekistan’s constitutional and international commitments to protect human rights, the government by mid-1992 became increasingly intolerant of all independent organizations. The Karimov government pointed to the conflict in neighboring Tajikistan, which broke out in May 1992, as providing justification for a crackdown on civil and political freedoms. Turning to repression in the name of safeguarding the nation from the threat of unrest became a hallmark of Karimov’s style of governance. Through a repressive registration regime for political parties, restrictions on freedom of expression, arbitrary arrests, and brutal physical attacks, the Uzbek government stifled the political opposition, including the Erk party. Many of the laws and practices that now severely limit the rights of those who speak out and challenge the government’s authority were introduced at that time.

In addition, President Karimov and his supporters argued that the involvement of Islamic political movements in the unrest in Tajikistan required his government to impose strict controls on religious organizations in Uzbekistan. These controls in practice became restrictions on the
right of pious Muslims to practice their religion free from state interference. The state sanctioned only certain mosques, imams, literature, and modes of prayer. President Karimov and other officials stated on many occasions that if harsh measures were not taken to control Islam in Uzbekistan, “Tajikistan will come to Uzbekistan tomorrow.” Muslim leaders who protested government control over religious practice in Uzbekistan became the target of persecution through arrests and harassment.

Representatives of foreign governments and international organizations grew increasingly critical of the human rights situation in Uzbekistan. After little more than a year of membership in the OSCE, Uzbekistan had become the focus of the largest number of reports of human rights violations among all member states. Year after year, conditions in Uzbekistan led the U.S. State Department to concur with international human rights organizations that the rights of expression, assembly, association, and freedom of religion were widely violated in Uzbekistan.
The Role of Human Rights Defenders

Pro-democracy activists within the opposition political group Birlik established the first nongovernmental human rights organization in Uzbekistan – the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan (HRSU) – in 1992. From the very beginning, it was clear that the Uzbek government would not tolerate independent human rights organizations. In December 1992 the president of HRSU, Abdumannob Pulatov, was arrested by Uzbek authorities at the conclusion of a human rights conference in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and charged with violating the “honor and dignity” of the president; he was later convicted but released in an amnesty the same day.⁹

The registration process has been one of the chief mechanisms used by the Uzbek government to hamper the development of independent nongovernmental organizations. Under Uzbekistan’s constitution, all associations must be registered with the government in order to function legally.¹⁰ The laws that have been established to register organizations are restrictive and are implemented aggressively by the government to effectively ban any association critical of its policies, including human rights groups.¹¹ Respected Uzbek human rights organizations that have formed over the years to respond to government oppression in Uzbekistan – including HRSU, Mothers against the Death Penalty and Torture, Mazlum (Oppressed), and the Democracy and Law Group – have been refused registration on multiple occasions.¹²

Few human rights organizations have succeeded in gaining legal status in Uzbekistan. The Ministry of Justice registered the Legal Aid Society in 1999.¹³ The Independent Human Rights Organization of Uzbekistan (IHROU) was rejected several times after lengthy attempts to tailor its documents to the requests of the Ministry of Justice, but was finally registered in March 2002. The human rights organization Ezgulik (Good Deed) received its registration certificate in March 2003 after two prior refusals. International pressure, including from the United States, was instrumental in enabling each of these organizations to register.
Counterterrorism in Uzbekistan

Already repressive conditions in Uzbekistan were greatly exacerbated after February 16, 1999, when six car bombs exploded in Tashkent, Uzbekistan’s capital city, killing 15 people and injuring at least 150 others. The bombs were apparently an attempt on President Karimov’s life.

Before an investigation took place, President Karimov and other officials indicated their belief that the bombings were carried out by “fanatics” and “religious extremists.” Several organizations were blamed for the bombings, including the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Hizb ut-Tahrir. While both groups espouse the creation of an Islamic state in Uzbekistan, Hizb ut-Tahrir – a religious and political movement that gained popularity in the mid- to late-1990s – claims that it does not use violence. In reaction to the bombings, the government imposed an indiscriminate ban on all independent Islamic organizations.

The Karimov government began an aggressive campaign against overtly pious Muslims, arresting and imprisoning thousands – including members of Hizb ut-Tahrir and others with no group affiliations. They were accused of extremism, terrorism, and “Wahhabism,” and were charged under a new “Law on Combating Terrorism.” Amendments were made to the Penal Code to create harsher penalties for anyone convicted of a terrorist act.

In June 1999, prosecutions began in connection with the February bombings. The trials were criticized by both human rights monitors and foreign governments as fundamentally unfair, as defendants were reportedly held incommunicado and denied access to legal counsel during the pre-trial phase. Government agents also reportedly tortured detainees to intimidate them and extract confessions, which courts then relied upon to make convictions.

At the same time, the government of Uzbekistan also cracked down on members of human rights organizations who monitored and criticized these abuses. A number of human rights defenders were arrested, beaten, prosecuted, and even tortured on account of their work.

Lawyers who represented those accused of extremism in the aftermath of the 1999 bombings were identified with their clients, targeted for personal threats and attacks, and often prosecuted under counterterrorism laws. Human rights activist Akhmadjon Madmarov was accused of membership in Hizb ut-Tahrir after defending members of the group in court. As part of the campaign to silence Madmarov, the government persecuted, imprisoned, and tortured members of his family.

The government also targeted activists who presented information about human rights violations at international meetings. Three days after the Legal Aid Society presented a report to the United Nations Committee against Torture...
on May 5, 2002, one of its lawyers, Ildar Shayfiev, was brutally beaten and detained. After Akhmadjon Madmarov openly testified about his experiences at the May 2003 annual meeting of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), one of his imprisoned sons was placed in solitary confinement for five months. Dilobar Khudayberganova, an activist with the nongovernmental organization Mothers Against the Death Penalty and Torture, received threatening, anonymous phone calls telling her to stop her human rights activities after she spoke at the same EBRD meeting. The callers advised that if she did not stop, she would meet the same fate as her brother, Iskandar Khudayberganov, who was convicted on charges of terrorism and anti-constitutional activity.

As part of a sustained effort to undermine and delegitimize human rights defenders the government denounced them as extremists and prosecuted them under a range of national security, counterterrorism, and counter-extremism laws. Human rights defenders were arrested and convicted on the grounds that materials relating to religious groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir were found on their property – materials they claimed were planted there by officials. Defenders were also arrested under provisions of the Penal Code that prohibit information dissemination that pertains to extremism.

In July 1999, Ismail Adylov, a well-known activist with HRSU and the opposition party Birlik, was charged with “attempting to overthrow the constitutional order, sabotage, and possession of material constituting a threat to public security and order.” Adylov, who reported on religious repression and human rights abuses committed by the Karimov government, claimed the materials were planted in his home by security forces at the time of his arrest. A court hearing that lasted only three hours declared him guilty; he then was sentenced in September 1999 to six years in prison. While in jail, Adylov was tortured and denied medical treatment. President Karimov finally granted his freedom on July 3, 2001, but only after a concerted international outcry over his arrest and confinement.
Mahbuba Kasimova, an activist with the Independent Human Rights Organization of Uzbekistan (IHROU), was arrested in May 1999 for housing fellow human rights defender Ravshan Hamidov, who was also a member of IHROU and the Birlik Movement. In the aftermath of the 1999 bombings, he was accused of being a “terrorist” and keeping extremist materials at Kasimova’s house. Kasimova, the mother of six children, was charged with “concealing a crime” as a result.

Kasimova’s arrest was part of the campaign against human rights defenders and independent organizations that followed the 1999 bombings. “The government began to attack our organization,” Kasimova said of the Independent Human Rights Organization of Uzbekistan. “I told them, ‘I am not a threat.’”

Kasimova was interrogated dozens of times, made to sign a confession, and forced to beg forgiveness on videotape. Officials accused her of complicity in the February bombings in front of relatives of victims of the violence. Newspaper, television, and radio coverage of the event echoed the accusations.

Kasimova’s trial on July 13 lasted just three hours, and her attorney was not allowed to represent her. The judge deliberated for just 15 minutes before convicting Kasimova and sentencing her to five years in prison.

Thanks to criticism and pressure from human rights groups and governments including the United States, Kasimova was released in December 2000. She was back in the courtroom soon afterwards monitoring trials of Muslims accused of membership in the banned Hizb ut-Tahrir group and reporting on the unfairness of the trials she observed.27

The imposition of stringent requirements to carry a national identity document has been another mechanism deployed by the authorities to impede the work of human rights defenders. Immediately after the February 16, 1999 bombings, a new passport regime was implemented as part of a broader national security initiative, requiring every citizen to carry his or her passport or other identification documents at all times.28 In addition, the Ministry of Interior and the National Security Service were authorized to randomly stop citizens to check identity and to go to homes and demand identity papers. Although the initiative applies to all Uzbek citizens, human rights defenders have been singled out for harassment and often prevented from performing their work or moving freely due to confiscation of their identity documents. The Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan and Ezgulik had difficulty holding their pre-approved national meetings in Tashkent in 2002 and 2003 because delegates could not travel to the meetings when their passports were seized by the police.29

Surat Ikramov is Chairman of the Independent Group for Human Rights Defenders, an organization formed in 2002 that is concerned primarily with cases of religious prisoners, detained journalists, and torture. He defends human rights activists in court proceedings and publicizes human rights abuses by the Uzbek government. Ikramov has represented Muslims persecuted for participating in independent religious institutions that fall outside government control as well as activists like Ruslan Sharipov, an independent journalist convicted for homosexual conduct.

On August 28th, 2003, four unknown men in masks and camouflage abducted and beat Ikramov after he met with a judge to set a court date for Sharipov’s appeal. The attackers bound his arms and legs and placed a plastic bag over his head while repeatedly restricting his air supply with a belt. They left him on the outskirts of Tashkent. In addition to a concussion, Ikramov suffered two broken ribs. While officials claimed that an investigation into the assault began on September 17th, 2003, it has been stopped without reaching any conclusions.

Ikramov was not deterred by the attack. In the months following the May 13, 2005, violence in Andizhan, he has spoken out against the government crackdown on dissidents. Since mid-May, police have been preventing him from leaving his apartment. On June 21, Ikramov was forced to go with six policemen in civilian clothes to a local police station. They refused to show him identification badges or any written order for him to go with them. A man sitting in the front seat of the car subjected him to profanities, called him an “enemy of people” and “traitor,” and hit him in the stomach. On June 30, Ikramov requested the Minister of Internal Affairs, Zakirjon Almatovich Almatov, to conduct an official investigation; there has been no progress reported.30

State officials were responsible for a number of physical assaults on human rights defenders. When attacks were perpetrated by unidentifiable assailants, the authorities routinely failed to investigate the crimes. Mikhail Dmitrivich Ardzinov, head of the Independent Human Rights Organization of Uzbekistan, was detained and beaten by police in June 1999. Shovrik
Ruzimuradov, a member of HRSU, was detained in 2001 and died in custody, allegedly from torture by police. In 2002, nine members of HRSU were imprisoned or forcibly confined in psychiatric hospitals in retaliation for their human rights monitoring and reporting work.

The government had already shown itself to be hostile toward human rights defenders, but after February 1999, Uzbek authorities characterized an increasingly broad range of political opposition and human rights activities as potentially giving aid and support to terrorists. On this basis, authorities branded a wide range of human rights defenders as extremists. Independent groups who objected to intrusive police and security control over public and private life began to be increasingly labeled unpatriotic and a threat to the constitutional order.
The Increasingly Difficult Situation for Defenders

The November 2003 “Rose Revolution” in Georgia, wherein political opposition leader Michael Saakashvili unseated the incumbent president on a platform of political reform and respect for the rule of law, inspired a sense of insecurity in the Karimov regime and contributed to an aggressive and renewed crackdown on independent organizations in Uzbekistan. The “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine that resulted in the swearing in of Viktor Yushchenko as president in January 2005, and the April 2005 resignation of the president of Kyrgyzstan following widespread protests, also contributed to an increasingly hostile environment for political activism within Uzbekistan and a heightened distaste for foreign involvement in Uzbek civil and political life. Indicating that Uzbekistan would avoid a “colorful revolution” at all costs, President Karimov has set out to impose new restrictions on journalists, human rights defenders, members of the political opposition, and other domestic critics.

Although two human rights organizations were registered in 2002 and 2003, as noted above, the government refused to register any additional organizations after the Rose Revolution, while threatening currently-registered organizations with ad-hoc re-registration requirements. For example, on February 2, 2005, Vasila Inoyatova, chairperson of Ezgulik was summoned to the Ministry of Justice and interrogated after reporting on the death of a prisoner in custody. He was given an official letter of warning that Ezgulik had violated the terms of its charter and the “Law on Freedom of Information,” and could face administrative action.

In some instances, activists have been attacked on account of their work with unregistered human rights organizations. For example, several members of HRSU have been harassed by officials or arrested for working with an unregistered organization. In February 2004, police in Jizzak questioned and harassed Muidinjon Kurbanov for his work as chairman of the regional branch of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan and as a member of Birlik, accusing him of working with “unregistered” and “illegal” organizations.

Since the November 2003 events in Georgia, Uzbek defenders have faced impediments to traveling abroad for the purpose of collaborating with regional and international organizations. Uzbekistan is one of only two former Soviet states to require that citizens seek permission from the government to leave the country. In January 2004, Akhmadjon Madmarov and Tolib Yakubov, both human rights defenders, were refused permission to attend a human rights seminar in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

The government published a decree on May 27, 2004, under which all women’s rights groups are required to undergo re-registration. Organizations critical of the government may be unable to continue their operations. Those that are successfully re-registered will be required to
operate under the umbrella of the Women’s Committee of Uzbekistan, a government agency headed by the vice prime minister, with a resultant loss of their independence. All educational programs, including those sponsored by nongovernmental human rights organizations, must now also receive a government license, according to a May 1 decree.

A major feature of the Uzbek government’s reaction to the democratic revolutions in neighboring Georgia and Ukraine was the inception of a number of new policies intended to curb international influence in Uzbekistan. This involved strict control of donations from international organizations to domestic groups, requirements of registration for international organizations with offices in Uzbekistan, and restrictions on communications between domestic and international human rights groups and journalists. These measures were all taken with the stated aim of curbing the infiltration of international terrorist groups in Uzbekistan, although the intended target of these new restrictions include democracy promotion institutions sponsored by foreign governments, like the U.S. government’s National Endowment for Democracy, as well as independent foundations that support independent Uzbek associations.

In February 2004, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted a decree requiring federal screening of the anticipated uses of any funding coming from abroad to nongovernmental organizations through bank transfers. It also ordered the transfer of all such funds received from international donors to government controlled banks. Violation of this law – which also includes a prohibition on the exchange of information potentially harmful to the state – is punishable as treason. Although the decree was announced as part of a scheme to prevent money laundering, in practice human rights organizations have been the primary targets of this policy. This decree presents a serious threat to the ability of human rights groups to continue to independently monitor and report on abuses.

Foreign organizations operating in Uzbekistan are also restricted. The closer alliance between the United States and Uzbekistan that developed rapidly in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 had the positive effect of allowing the establishment of new Tashkent offices of several U.S.-based organizations, including Freedom House, the National Democratic Institute, and the International Republican Institute. However, since the 2003 events in Georgia, the government has become increasingly intolerant toward foreign nongovernmental organizations it accuses of fomenting “regime change” in Uzbekistan, suspending the operations of American organizations like IREX, the International Research and Exchanges Board. According to IREX staff members, the decision to stop its operations was motivated by the organization’s refusal to provide information to the government about Uzbeks who studied abroad while receiving financial support from IREX.

Justice Minister Abdusamat Palvanzade warned international organizations not to meddle in Uzbekistan’s internal affairs and indicated that such groups would be banned from the country if they broke any of Uzbekistan’s administrative laws. The restrictive registration regime, which had been effectively used to keep domestic human rights groups from functioning legally, was turned against international organizations as well. The government also refused to register the Brussels-based International Crisis Group, and detained one of the organization’s researchers.

In November 2003, the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, which trains local journalists in areas of conflict and is based in London, lost its official registration in Uzbekistan. The international media organization Internews had its registration suspended during the fall of 2004 for failing to register its logo and for not informing authorities about its activities outside Tashkent, the number of people sitting on its board, and a change of address; a court ultimately ordered the organization’s closure. Internews trained
local journalists in reporting techniques, documented press freedom abuses in Uzbekistan, and provided pro bono legal representation to journalists and media outlets as they came under attack by officials.43

In a December 11, 2003 decree, the Uzbek government required international nongovernmental organizations operating in Uzbekistan to register with the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before March 1, 2004.44 This measure has had a serious impact on the ability of international organizations to implement independent programs and to monitor and report on human rights conditions in Uzbekistan.

The Open Society Institute, which opened a Tashkent office in 1996 and was responsible for equipping most of Uzbekistan’s universities and more than 100 secondary schools with computers and internet access, was denied registration and forced to close down. In an April 14, 2004 letter, the Ministry of Justice explained that it had decided to deny re-registration to OSI because the organization “discredited [the Uzbek] government’s policies.”45 Staff members of OSI had received personal threats.46

The government also attacked international organizations through changes to criminal laws. Article 157 of the Criminal Code was amended in February 2004 to make “disclosure of secret information to foreign States and organizations” punishable as treason. This provision previously applied only to information passed on to foreign states, but now also covers international organizations. International human rights organizations have expressed concern that this provision could stifle communications between local and international monitors.47

Foreign organizations operating in Uzbekistan have also faced increased surveillance. In November 2003, Freedom House went to a local organizer’s home seeking an explanation, several vehicles arrived, with one official claiming to be a deputy governor and others who manhandled and threatened the organizers.48 In 2004 the government introduced burdensome new procedures requiring international NGOs to obtain an “agreement” from the Ministry of Justice on the content, agenda, timing and place of any activity, and required them to invite Ministry of Justice officials to attend.
Recent Violence and Subsequent Attacks on Defenders

At least 47 people were killed in bombings and shootings in Tashkent and the city of Bukhara in March and July 2004.49 Though no organization claimed responsibility, Uzbek officials once again linked the attacks to Islamic militants.50 In turn, the bombings sparked a new wave of arrests and prosecutions of Muslims regardless of any affiliation to Islamic political organizations. Uzbek authorities arrested and detained hundreds of individuals gathered through sweeps conducted by Mahallas (local enforcement groups) on suspicion of terrorist activity.51

Official comments on the 2004 bombings focused on alleged assistance to local Islamic groups by international terrorist organizations, including Al-Qaeda. Prosecutor Rashid Kadyrov noted that the use of suicide bombers “indicated foreign involvement” while Foreign Minister Sadiq Safayev said that the “hands of international terror” were behind the violence and that “attempts are being made to split the international anti-terror coalition.” 52 Severe media restrictions prevented independent investigations into the exact circumstances of the attacks. A definitive link to Islamic radicals, either domestic or international, has not been established.

As part of the roundups that followed the March 2004 bombings, authorities in the eastern city of Andizhan arrested a group of 23 businessmen between June and August 2004 on charges of “religious extremism.”53 In February 2005, their trials began.54 Tensions among citizens of Andizhan – many of whom had been employed by the jailed businessmen – rose as the trials proceeded. On May 12, 2005, the night before the verdict in the trial was to be read, armed individuals broke into the prison and freed a number of prisoners. Violence broke out, claiming the lives of several guards and policemen.

That night, crowds began to collect in Andizhan’s city center. By mid-morning on May 13, thousands of unarmed civilians had gathered in what became a demonstration of generalized protest against poverty, unemployment, and political repression in Uzbekistan. One participant said “it was the first public meeting in 15 years. People were finally speaking freely, complaining about high unemployment, low wages, rampant corruption, poor living conditions and constant repression.”55

According to eyewitness accounts, helicopters, buses, and military tanks arrived, and armed soldiers fired their weapons into the crowd of hundreds of unarmed civilians later that day.56 According to various estimates, the death toll is likely to have exceeded 750 men, women and children. The killings in Andizhan marked a significant escalation in governmental repression. As one witness to the massacre told Western journalists: “I used to not believe all the horror stories that I heard about Karimov, but after what he did to us in Andizhan I can believe anything. He is not a human being. He must be brought to justice for this bloodbath.”57
The Uzbek government, however, has maintained that the army responded with gunfire to an organized gathering of terrorists and extremists in Andizhan and did not fire on civilians. Official estimates of the death toll have varied from 70 to 187 casualties. President Karimov and other officials insist that any civilian casualties were the victims of terrorists, and not government forces.\(^58\)

The May 13 killings in Andizhan in turn prompted one of the worst crackdowns by the Karimov government on independent media and human rights defenders. With Uzbek media under tight government control, defenders played an important role in the immediate aftermath of the violence by interviewing eyewitnesses and speaking with the international press. As a result of their work to try to expose the truth about the violence in Andizhan, many were quickly faced with arrest, detention, interrogation, forcible searches of their homes, and other forms of harassment and intimidation.

**Saidjahon Zainabitdinov** is a human rights defender from Andizhan and chairman of the human rights group Apelliatsia (Appeal). Zainabitdinov has actively supported individuals accused of religious extremism, including the 23 businessmen whose trial triggered the May 13 Andizhan demonstrations.

On August 28, 2003, Zainabitdinov suffered persecution for criticizing Uzbek authorities. The Andizhan Province Court pressed criminal defamation charges against him in relation to an article that he wrote on police corruption. His case was dismissed in December 2003.

Then on May 21, 2005, Zainabitdinov was arrested and held incommunicado for three days. An eyewitness to the May 13 protests, he had commented to various news agencies on the government’s use of violence to disperse demonstrators. He was detained in the Andizhan police station’s basement, and allowed to meet his lawyer, but not able to receive food from his family. The authorities accused him of “spreading information with the aim of causing panic” and “terrorism.” He remains in jail, and is awaiting trial.\(^59\)

As part of the government’s attempt to prevent independent investigations of the massacre, two members of Ezgulik, Ulugbek Bakirov and Fazleddin Gafurov, were beaten and harassed by authorities on May 20 while on their way to interview witnesses of the Andizhan incidents.\(^60\)

Four human rights defenders, including Tolib Yakubov, chairman of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan, were harassed by police on June 16 while in Andizhan on a fact-finding mission for the International Helsinki Federation.\(^61\)

Information storage devices likely to contain information relating to investigations and human rights work have also been confiscated. Dilmurod Mukhitdinov, Muhammadkodir Otahonov, and Musajon Bobojonov, all leading human rights defenders in the Andizhan region, were arrested and detained on May 28. Their homes were searched without warrant, and their computers, CDs, and other documents were confiscated. They have been charged with “infringement of the constitutional order,” “forming a criminal group,” and “preparation and distribution of materials containing threats to public order and security.”\(^62\)

In the aftermath of the May 13 massacre, security agents confiscated the passports of members of human rights organizations. Police detained Muzaffarmizo Iskhakov, a longtime human rights defender and head of the Andizhan branch of Ezgulik, for several days without a warrant. They then searched his home, seizing human rights publications and a computer. The next day, he was arrested with a warrant. Iskhakov was released on bail, but police retained his passport and ordered him not to leave the city.\(^63\)

The clampdown on defenders has not been limited to those living in the Andizhan region, but is affecting defenders nationwide. In Namangan, for example, Sobithon Ustabaev, a human rights defender belonging to the Namangan Group for Protection of Human Rights, was arrested on May 22 while peacefully protesting against the government use of force in Andizhan. He was detained for fifteen days under the administrative code. On May 28, police arrested...
Kholiqnazar Ganiyev, head of the Samarqand offices of Ezgulik and Birlik, on charges of “hooliganism” and sentenced him to fifteen days of administrative arrest. In Tashkent, during the night of May 29-30, police harassed, beat, and arrested twelve members of Ezgulik who were participating in a legal seminar at the Hotel Olympia.64

Defenders who have been arrested and taken into official custody have suffered severe abuse during their detention. Norboy Kholjigitov, chairman of the Ishtikhan branch of the HRSU, was arrested on June 5 on charges of corruption. Kholjigitov was tortured while in detention, and as a result has suffered worsening symptoms of his diabetes. He was transferred to a medical ward, but has not been released.65 His lawyer, Asliddin Suvankulov, was brutally beaten in his home by a National Security Service agent. During the incident, he was warned not to interfere in his client’s case or else the agent would return and break all of his ribs. Suvankulov was refused access to his client.66

On August 11, Igor Rotar, a Russian journalist, was detained by authorities in the Tashkent airport and told that his name had been placed on a watch list by the National Security Service. Though Rotar’s name had been on the list for three years, he had not been prevented from entering Uzbekistan during that time. Rotar’s last trip to Uzbekistan was in June, when he provided independent reporting on the violence in Andizhan for a Norwegian news service. An agent told Rotar that he would not be allowed to return to Uzbekistan as his “libelous” articles had “done great harm to Uzbekistan.” The authorities deported Rotar, listing as their justification: “entry to the Republic of Uzbekistan closed.”68

As part of the government media’s campaign against those who have tried to expose the facts about the massacre at Andizhan, journalists who work for or contributed writing to Western media have been condemned as betrayers and pawns of the West. Deputy Prosecutor General Anvar Nabiyev called journalists “carrion-eating jackals” and claimed that journalists for respected international news agencies reported biased accounts of the events in Andizhan, presenting “terrorists as freedom fighters and promoters of democracy.”69

International organizations have also come under heavy attack in the government-controlled media since the May 13 events. An article in Khurriyat, one of three major government newspapers, informed its readers that “terrorist groups” operating inside Uzbekistan are being financed by Freedom House and the U.S. Helsinki Commission. In an article “Sham Defenders of Human Rights,” published by the Uzbek Parliament’s Narodnoye Slovo, nongovernmental human rights organizations were accused of “propagandizing” in the refugee camps set up in Kyrgyzstan to receive those who fled Andizhan after the May 13 violence.70 The article called human rights defenders “thugs” and “monsters with human faces” who turned innocent Uzbeks against their motherland.
Arrests and beatings of those who have spoken out about the May 13 events have heightened a pervasive climate of fear in Uzbekistan, preventing witnesses from coming forward. In public places like markets, plainclothes agents listen for conversations about the massacre or other expressions of dissent. One Uzbek described how a woman who was casually speaking with a vendor in a market about the government’s role in the violence at Andizhan was accosted immediately by a man who grabbed her by the hand, played back a tape recording of her conversation, and then led her away. A woman remarked that while riding a bus, she overheard another woman talking about a report of the carnage left in the wake of the Andizhan massacre. When the speaker got off the bus, a young man followed her and soon after placed handcuffs on her and took her away.

In the months that followed the attack on civilians in Andizhan, the Uzbek government has harassed, arrested, imprisoned, tortured, and otherwise persecuted scores of human rights defenders. It has shown its readiness to commit further grave human rights violations in order to prevent the truth about what happened at Andizhan from reaching international monitors.

An investigation into the uprising, conducted by the Uzbek government with some input from Russian officials, pointed to 15 suspected instigators of the Andizhan uprising. Absent the independent investigations of the press and human rights activists the findings of this investigation have little credibility. The trial of the 15 individuals has been criticized as a largely scripted show trial. Only one eyewitness, Makhbuba Zakirova, presented testimony that contradicted the government’s version of events, describing how Uzbek soldiers opened fire on civilians who were waving white cloths.

**Elena Urlaeva**, human rights activist and member of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan, is a vocal critic of the Uzbek government. She led efforts to defend the rights of individuals dispossessed of their homes by a road-building project in 2001. She has continued her work organizing and participating in political protests, most recently to support persecuted journalists and defenders, and to denounce the Andizhan massacre.

In attempts to silence Urlaeva, Uzbek officials have repeatedly confined her to psychiatric institutions. She was first detained and forcibly committed to a psychiatric hospital in April 2001. International pressure led to her release two months later. But in late 2002, she was again subjected to four months of involuntary psychiatric treatment. Urlaeva reported that on both occasions she was given strong psychiatric drugs. On April 17, 2003, she was arrested and threatened with commitment after demonstrating in front of the presidential offices.

Following her activities related to Andizhan, Urlaeva was placed under house arrest in May and threatened with a gun by police on July 13. These actions were likely aimed at preventing her from attending demonstrations and speaking out against the government. Then on August 27, authorities detained her and ordered her placement in a psychiatric institution once again. Urlaeva is accused of “desecrating state symbols” for passing out a cartoon that lampoons state officials. The authorities claim she is being held in a psychiatric facility because her competency to stand trial is in question.

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Political cartoon depicting Uzbek officials feeding from a cow resembling the map of Uzbekistan for which Urlaeva was arrested.
If it had not been for the hypocrisy of certain Western countries as well as respected international organizations, the governments like that of the Russian Federation would not have dared to openly support the massacre of Andizhanis.

Tolib Yakubov, Chairman of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan
tors.” No response came from the Department of Defense.

For a few weeks after the Andizhan massacre, maintenance of the air base became the crux of the debate within the United States regarding its stance toward Uzbekistan. Although the State Department has long documented torture, religious persecution, other restrictions of basic freedoms, as well as the repression of human rights defenders by Uzbek authorities, in the years following September 11, 2001, military and strategic interests shaped the bi-lateral U.S.–Uzbek relationship. The United States had been permitted to use the military base as part of an agreement it struck with Uzbekistan following the September 11 attacks. The agreement included provisions granting Uzbekistan millions of dollars of military and counterterrorism aid.

The U.S. Congress, however, long had demonstrated its own ambivalence about this expedient relationship with an increasingly repressive government. Beginning in 2002, Congress demonstrated its concern by passing legislation conditioning foreign assistance to Uzbekistan on improvements in the human rights and democracy arenas. This came after members of the Helsinki Commission cautioned against giving too much aid to an authoritarian government. In March 2002, eight members of the Helsinki Commission wrote:

Nearly a decade after Uzbekistan joined the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, a pattern of clear, gross and uncorrected violations of fundamental OSCE principles on democracy, human rights, and the rule of law continues. Against this backdrop, recent pronouncements out of Tashkent about a renewed commitment to address longstanding issues of democratization and human rights will continue to ring hollow unless they are matched by concrete deeds.

Despite continuing human rights abuses in Uzbekistan, however, the United States in 2003 certified that sufficient improvements were being made to allow military aid to continue.

The State Department reacted to the crackdown on Muslims and independent organizations in Uzbekistan that followed the Rose Revolution in Georgia in November 2003 by issuing a warning to the Uzbek government a month later that it could lose its U.S. funding. The Uzbek government tried to assuage U.S. concerns over its human rights record by releasing a jailed human rights defender in February 2004, just before Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld arrived in Tashkent to discuss military strategy and aid. But when the nation’s human rights record did not improve, the State Department determined that the conditions of the implementing legislation had not been met and decertified foreign assistance funds – to the tune of $18 million – in 2004.

At the same time, however, the Department of Defense contradicted and undermined the message being sent by the State Department. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Richard B. Myers visited Tashkent shortly after decertification was announced, and criticized the decision as “very shortsighted,” announcing $21 million in separate funding for bioterrorism defense. The Pentagon in fact increased its aid package in 2004, demonstrating that despite the concerns of the U.S. State Department the strategic and military partnership would continue to trump human rights concerns in the bilateral relationship. This mixed message from Washington substantially weakened the U.S. voice on human rights issues with the Uzbek government.

Evidence has also surfaced that the United States began to send its own detainees in its fight against terrorism to Uzbekistan for interrogation, even as the United States’ official human rights reports identified Uzbek jails as places where torture is known to occur routinely.

When the United States later criticized Uzbekistan for its crackdown on civilians and defenders in Andizhan, the Uzbek government-controlled media launched a campaign against the United...
States, pointing to the hypocrisy in its calls for multilateralism and transparency that do not seem to apply to certain U.S. practices in its “Global War on Terrorism.”

When the U.S. government stepped forward and joined the call for safe resettlement outside Uzbekistan of refugees fleeing the violence in Andizhan, the government-controlled Uzbek media launched a smear campaign against it and other countries that supported the resettlement. Major newspapers and radio programs accused the United States of inspiring the Andizhan revolt itself and of trying to colonize Uzbekistan.

This culminated in a decision to terminate U.S. use of the air base in Uzbekistan. On August 26, Uzbekistan’s Senate approved the executive’s July 29 order demanding the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the Karshi-Khanabad base. Then on September 30, the Washington Post reported that Uzbekistan was terminating cooperation with Washington on counterterrorism more broadly because of its objections to U.S. pressure on democratic reforms and human rights. The U.S. government is concerned that as it withdraws, Tashkent looks increasingly to Russia and China for strategic support. U.S. officials took a firm line that its cooperation with Uzbekistan should extend to all areas, including democratic reform, but mixed signals have continued.

The Pentagon confirmed its intention to pay the Uzbek government $23 million for use of the airbase, despite harsh criticism from within the United States. However, on October 5, the U.S. Senate voted in support of an amendment offered by Senator John McCain (a Republican from Arizona) to prevent the Defense Department from paying Uzbekistan for one year.

Both the Russian and Chinese governments, which with Uzbekistan and three other Central Asian countries are members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), publicly applauded President Karimov’s handling of the Andizhan situation. Vyacheslav Qosimov, director of the SCO’s regional anti-terrorism structure, expressly condemned the Uzbek government’s handling of the crisis: “All SCO members described the Uzbek government’s actions in Andizhan Region as an appropriate localization of terrorist and extremist action.”

Russia joined Uzbekistan in stating that an international investigation was not necessary. “We come out against international investigations. We have irrefutable evidence of a foreign trace in these events,” Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov said on arriving in Brussels to attend a session of the Russia-NATO Council on June 9, 2005. It has been suggested that Uzbek discomfiture with the United States coincided that Russian and Chinese discontent with the growing U.S. military presence in the region, expressed most openly at meetings of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

The contradictory messages from the international community in the immediate aftermath of the Andizhan events may at first have reassured the Karimov government that even egregious acts of repression will not bring the type of coordinated responses that would be likely to help promote positive change. Other autocratic leaders in the volatile Central Asian region have now seen that blatant disregard of fundamental human rights does not carry with it severe consequences.

With no strong, credible voices of internal opposition, President Karimov has rejected all requests for an international inquiry, refusing entry even to E.U. Foreign Secretary Javier Solana’s personal representative on human rights in early June.

To most observers U.S. policy toward Uzbekistan has appeared divided, ambivalent, and uncoordinated. This lack of a unified approach has prevented Washington from exerting effective influence on human rights conditions in Andizhan, and has helped diminish the overall international response to Uzbekistan’s human rights violations.
Conclusion

If further deterioration in human rights conditions in Uzbekistan is to be avoided, it is critical that the international community, including the United States, take concerted action to bring more effective pressure on Uzbekistan to abide by its human rights obligations. Government repression was clearly a factor in the outbreak of the Andizhan protests, indicating that its continuation is likely to contribute further to unrest and instability. Violent extremist groups, which may be involved in acts of terrorism within Uzbekistan or elsewhere in the region, have shown that they will not be deterred by generalized state repression. Indeed, such groups are accustomed to operating clandestinely and without regard to the law. By undermining the rule of law, repressive governments, like that of President Karimov, play to the strength of violent extremists.

With elections on the horizon in several countries in Central Asia, the example set by the government of Uzbekistan increases political polarization and strengthens authoritarian tendencies within neighboring countries. The message from the international community must be clear: security and stability are improved by respect for human rights and adherence to the rule of law.

The demand from the international community for an independent international inquiry into the Andizhan massacre is of crucial importance to independent human rights activists in Uzbekistan. In order to carry out a thorough investigation any independent inquiry team will have to rely on independent sources of information within Uzbekistan, including journalists and human rights monitors, some of whom have gathered contemporaneous reports of the events. Moreover, such an international inquiry would have an obligation to ensure that its sources of information, both witnesses and local monitors, will be protected against any reprisal from the Uzbek authorities. This enhanced international protection for local human rights activists would lift a heavy burden from human rights defenders in Uzbekistan, and would facilitate the free flow of information about human rights conditions throughout the country.

Independent human rights defenders play an essential role in ensuring that the government of Uzbekistan’s violations of human rights do not go unreported. The government of Uzbekistan appears to understand this all too well. From the early years of his tenure, President Karimov has taken steps to restrict and impede the work of human rights defenders. As violations have peaked, attacks on human rights defenders have intensified.

The situation of human rights defenders in Uzbekistan is not just an indicator of the broader human rights situation. Defenders are critical agents of change who can help implement tangible human rights progress. By pressuring the government of Uzbekistan to lift its restrictions, harassment, and attacks against human rights defenders, the international community can empower these activists to contribute to a domestically-driven movement for reform and human rights. The government of Uzbekistan is supported by its powerful neighbors in Moscow.
and Beijing in its determination to resist scrutiny or reform of its human rights practices; as such, the efforts of local defenders – supported by the international community – provide the best hope for positive change in Uzbekistan.
Recommendations

To the Government of Uzbekistan

Bring its policies regarding the rights of independent individuals and organizations engaged in the promotion and protection of internationally-recognized human rights into line with its constitution and with its obligations under international law. Uzbekistan is bound by the terms of the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and should comply with the rights of defenders outlined in the 1998 UN Declaration on the Rights of Human Rights Defenders. This includes, but is not limited to:

- **Freedom of Association**: Any registration requirements of NGOs should be applied fairly and without discrimination to organizations with aims to educate the public, monitor and expose human rights violations, or to encourage democratization. Decrees that have been issued in order to restrict support from foreign organizations to Uzbek human rights groups should be repealed. Foreign nongovernmental organizations that promote and protect human rights should be allowed to function legally, freely and without reprisal.

- **Freedom of Assembly**: The government should repeal laws adopted during the Soviet era, which fall short of international standards, to prevent human rights organizations from organizing peaceful assemblies. Where notice is required to ensure security for meetings and peaceful protests, authorities should respond to requests for permits promptly and without discrimination against human rights defenders or other independent critics of the government.

- **Freedom of Expression**: Members of the independent and foreign media should be allowed to investigate and report freely in Uzbekistan. Nongovernmental organizations should not be limited in their communications on human rights issues with foreign media and international human rights organizations. No one should face official retribution for such contacts. Laws restricting freedom of expression and the sharing of information should be repealed, and Uzbekistan’s policies should be brought in line with its obligations under the ICCPR and the U.N. Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (the U.N. Defender Declaration).

- **Physical Attacks**: The government should cease all forms of threats and physical attacks against human rights activists.

- **False Prosecutions**: The government of Uzbekistan should stop branding human rights defenders and other independent, nonviolent critics of its policies as criminal, terrorists, enemies of the state, and extremists, and prosecuting them under criminal
laws intended to promote security in Uzbekistan.

- **Arbitrary Detention**: Uzbekistan should cease the illegal detention in prisons or other facilities, such as psychiatric hospitals, of human rights defenders and other critics of the government. All human rights defenders who have been arbitrarily or wrongly detained should be immediately released.

- **Torture**: The government of Uzbekistan should halt the practice of torture.

- The government of Uzbekistan should invite the UN Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders and the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary, or Arbitrary Executions to make an official visit.

**To the International Community**

- Member states of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) should send a unified message to the government of Uzbekistan condemning abuses that occurred during the killings in Andizhan and the crackdown on civil society and independent media that followed.

- Member states of the OSCE should make all agreements with Uzbekistan contingent on verifiable improvement of its human rights practices.

- Human Rights First welcomes the decisions of the Council of the European Union imposing sanctions and penalties on the government of Uzbekistan for its refusal to allow an independent international inquiry into the events in Andizhan in May 2005. It particularly endorses conclusion 8: *In order to pursue the international community’s efforts for an independent inquiry, the Council requests EU Member States in the OSCE and the UN to support invoking respective mechanisms and procedures, and calls on like-minded countries to cooperate to this end with EU Member States. The Council urges the Uzbek authorities to lend their full cooperation to this process.*

**To the Government of the United States of America**

- The United States should make clear to the government of Uzbekistan that protection of human rights and respect for civil society are an essential part of ensuring stability and security in Uzbekistan.

- To this end, the United States should cease sending mixed messages. The message that has tended to come from the State Department – that the United States expects to cooperate with the government of Uzbekistan across the board, and will not sacrifice concerns about human rights and democracy to the imperative of security cooperation – should be shared and enunciated, in public and in private, by all branches of the U.S. government.

- The United States government should fully and unequivocally support international calls for an independent international inquiry into the events in Andizhan in May 2005. The United States government should express particular concern about the situation of human rights defenders and witnesses who have questioned the Uzbek authorities’ version of the events in Andizhan.

- The United States government should apply pressure to the government of Uzbekistan to accede to the demands of the international community by supporting the sanctions imposed by the European Union on October 3, 2005. These include:
  
  - The imposition of an embargo on exports to Uzbekistan of arms, military equipment and other equipment
that might be used for internal repression.

- The implementation of travel restrictions on admission to the United States aimed at those individuals directly responsible for the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force in Andizhan.

- Increased focus on building supportive links with Uzbek civil society, especially organizations involved in the promotion and protection of human rights.

- All bilateral contacts by U.S. government officials with President Karimov and members of his government should include strong, consistent messages on the importance of respect for democracy, the rule of law and human rights in Uzbekistan.
Endnotes


3 President Karimov is no longer affiliated with any political party.


10 A majority of the organizations that have been registered are hobby-related associations (such as stamp collecting groups) or groups closely aligned with the government’s own policies.

11 Registration requirements are extremely onerous and consideration of applications is frequently delayed for years at a time without cause provided to applicants. Often, after an application has been submitted several times, the Ministry will disregard its earlier findings and reject previously accepted documents. No judicial appeal of a denial of registration by the Ministry of Justice has ever been successful. The relevant laws include the 1999 “Law on Nongovernmental Nonprofit Organizations” and the 1991 “Law on Public Organizations” and its recent amendments.


13 According to the Legal Aid Society, the Ministry of Justice has since made several attempts to terminate the organization’s legal registration.


16 The government of Uzbekistan uses the term “Wahhabi” to describe radical opposition Islamic groups perceived as a threat to national security. In other contexts, Wahhabism is a movement within Islam for which the Q’ur’an and the Hadith are basic texts. Wahhabi theology advocates a puritanical and legalistic stance in matters of faith and religious practice.


19 Interview with Uzbek defender whose identity is being withheld due to security concerns, November 11, 2004.

20 After a protracted civil suit against the police officers responsible for the beating, the perpetrators and the Ministry of Interior admitted responsibility for the beating.

21 After observing a protest of women relatives of religious prisoners, Madmarov was summoned to meet with a local prosecutor. When he arrived, he was told that local officials, police, and prosecutors had formed a “commission” to present him with an official letter warning that he would face criminal charges if he attended any more protests. He continues his work in defense of human rights.

22 The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) denied funding to Uzbekistan in July 2004 based on its poor human rights record.

23 See Human Rights Watch Fact Sheet: “EBRD annual meeting, Tashkent and after” (June 2003).

24 Article 244 of the Penal Code, entitled “Riots,” punishes the dissemination of materials constituting a threat to public safety and order, and “establishing, leading, or participating in religious extremist, separatist, fundamentalist or other prohibited organizations.” Article 159 of the Penal Code, “Attacks Against the Constitutional Order of the Republic of Uzbekistan,” makes it illegal for members of the public to call for change of the existing state structure. It also prohibits the dissemination of materials proposing such acts. This law was commonly used against members of human rights organizations that published papers or press releases critical of government abuses. This has had a chilling effect on human rights reporting. Articles 159, 161 and 244.1 of the Uzbek Criminal Code


27 President Decree No. UP 2240, “On the Improvement of the Passport System in Uzbekistan, February 26, 1999; and Cabinet Decree No. 178, “On the Improvement of the Passport System in Uzbekistan,” April 16 1999; and Appendix No. 1 to this decree on special Passport commissions in the regions, Tashkent city, and the Karakalpakstan Republic.


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Cabinet of Ministers Decree Number 56, February 4, 2004.

Comments submitted by Legal Aid Society, Uzbekistan, on file with Human Rights First.


Ibid.


Ibid.


Mahalla Committees serve as a primary source of information for law enforcement and perform some policing tasks themselves. They also have various other administrative functions within the community. Mahallas have been reported to impose extrajudicial punishments, such as “hate rallies” against independent Muslims and leaders. Human Rights Watch, Uzbekistan: From House to House: Abuses by Mahalla Committees, September 30, 2003, available at http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/uzbekistan0903/ (accessed October 14, 2005).


According to the men, they had been unable to conduct business within the government controlled system after their families were targeted for repression in the wake of the 1999 bombings. They said they pooled their resources and created successful businesses with local support that threatened government businesses in the region. As a result, they were arrested for religious extremism in the context of counterterrorism operations in 2004. See International Crisis Group, Uzbekistan: The Andijon Uprising, May 2005, and Human Rights Watch, The Bullets Were Falling Like Rain, June 2005.


Zahidov Akrom, whose wife was shot and killed in his arms. As reported by Volosevich, Beliakov, Fanchetti and Dariya, “Terrified Uzbeks Tell of Three Massacres,” Sunday Times.

Immediately following the May 13 violence, Uzbekistan’s Interior Ministry put the estimated death toll at 70. On May 17, Uzbek Prosecutor-General Rashid Qodirov announced that 169 rebels or bandits were killed in Andizhan. On June 16, Anvar Nabiev, the deputy prosecutor-general, changed that figure to 176; claims that those killed were terrorists and their victims. On July 11, the number was raised once again to 187. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, “Factbox: Andijon Timeline,” September 20, 2005, available at http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle2005/09/43812BFB-5F71-48CF-80C9-D712DCE4855E.html (accessed October 15, 2005).
developing their effective cooperation in political affairs, the economy and trade, science and technology, culture, education, energy, legal areas as well as the field of national security. The text of the agreement is available at http://www.ihf-hr.org/viewbinary/viewhtml.php?doc_id=6404 (accessed October 15, 2005).

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is an international intergovernmental organization founded in Shanghai on June 15, 2001, by six countries: China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. According to its website, the main purposes of SCO are: strengthening mutual trust and good-neighbourliness and friendship among member states; developing their effective cooperation in political affairs, the economy and trade, science and technology, culture, education, energy, transportation, environmental protection and other fields; working together to maintain regional peace, security and stability; and promoting the creation of a new international political and economic order featuring democracy, justice and rationality. See http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/topics/sco/657970.htm (accessed October 14, 2005).
91 Report by Interfax, June 16, 2005.
92 “It is much to my regret that your government has decided not to receive my personal representative,” Solana said in a letter sent to Uzbek President Islam Karimov. “I believe that it should be possible at all times that diplomatic envoys are received to transmit messages and conduct dialogue. It is indeed the very foundation of our Partnership and Cooperation Agreement,” he wrote, referring to the main agreement between Brussels and Tashkent. “Uzbekistan Keeps EU Envoy Out of Andijan,” MosNews, June 4, 2005.
94 Decree No. 9306-XI and all Soviet Laws not amended or abrogated are still in force in Uzbekistan. This decree was subsequently repealed within the Russian Federation. The Ministry of Justice has indicated that this act has not yet been repealed in Uzbekistan. It requires a request in writing to a local authority for permission to hold a public event, at least 10 days in advance. This request must include the number of participants, along with their addresses. Citizens over 18 years old, representatives of trade unions and organizations, NGOs, and other public associations have the right to an appeal should a local authority deny permission to hold a public event.