



Middle East Studies Association of North America

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August 9, 1993

President Islam Karimov
Dom Pravitel'stva
Lenin Square
Tashkent, Uzbekistan
Commonwealth of Independent States

Dear President Karimov:

The Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association is concerned about the dismissal and arrest of university professors in Uzbekistan and the closure of Tajik University. The Middle East Studies Association comprises 2300 academics worldwide who teach and conduct research on the Middle East and North Africa. The association publishes the respected *International Journal of Middle East Studies* and is committed to ensuring respect for the principles of academic freedom and human rights throughout the region.

According to our information, the following professors were dismissed from their positions, apparently for association with organizations working for peaceful political change in Uzbekistan. These individuals are:

Dr. Marat Zakhidov, associate professor of applied mathematics and mechanics at Tashkent State University and a member of the board of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan, dismissed on September 27, 1992.

Dr. Tolib Iaqubov, associate professor of algebra at Nizamiy Tashkent State Pedagogical Institute, dismissed on December 4, 1992.

We have learned that the following professors have been detained as well as dismissed from their positions for involvement in political associations working for peaceful change. They have been charged under Article 62 of the Criminal Code, which forbids "organized activities leading to the perpetration of particularly serious crimes and also participation in an antigovernmental organization."

Dr. Shukhrat Ismatullaev, associate professor of mathematics at Tashkent State University and a member of the American Mathematical Society, dismissed from the university on September 25, 1992 and detained since April 20, 1993.

Dr. Khazratkul Khudaiberdiev, senior researcher at the Tashkent Irrigation Institute Saniiri and a member of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan, arrested on December 9, 1992 upon his return from an international human rights conference in Kyrgyztan. He has repeatedly been denied the right to legal counsel of his choice and access to family members. His trial began in July 1993.

Dr. Jamol Mirsaidov, professor at Samarqand State University, arrested in September 1992 when he returned from participating in the World Conference of Tajiks, held in Tajikistan.

Dr. Otanazar Aripov, professor of physics at Tashkent State Technical University, arrested on December 21, 1992, but subsequently released for health reasons pending his trial, which began in July 1993.

Dr. Olim Karimov, professor held in pre-trial detention January 18 - February 25, 1993, but was released for health reasons. His trial began in July 1993.

We have learned that **Dr. Abdumannob Pulatov**, associate professor of mathematics at Tashkent State University and chair of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan, was abducted in Kyrgyztan on December 8 at the end of the above mentioned international human rights conference by plainclothes officials sent from Uzbekistan. He was charged under Article 191-4 (2) of the criminal code for offending the "dignity and honor" of the president of the republic and sentenced on January 28, 1993 to three years in a labor camp. We understand that Dr. Pulatov was amnestied by presidential order but subsequently left Uzbekistan for the United States.

Moreover, we have learned that Tajik University in Samarqand was closed in early 1992. We understand that this is part of a pattern of closing schools in which Tajik is the language of instruction.

The Committee on Academic Freedom believes that these dismissals and arrests violate principles of academic freedom, freedom of speech and freedom of association. They also comprise a form of collective punishment in that they penalize the professors' families, who lose their means of financial support. The dismissals, arrests and closure of a leading university have chilling effects of freedom of expression throughout Uzbekistan.

The dismissals and arrests appear to violate the constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, adopted on December 8, 1992. The constitution states in Article 13 that "the individual, his life, freedom, honor, dignity and other inalienable rights are of the highest value." Similarly, Article 29 affirms that "everyone has the right to freedom of thought, speech and convictions."

Moreover, the Republic of Uzbekistan is signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political rights (ICCPR) and committed to upholding the human rights provisions of the conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Article 19 of the ICCPR guarantees "that everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference" and

that "everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds." Articles 2 and 26 also guarantee that individuals' rights and equal protection of the law cannot be denied on the basis of political opinion.

We are concerned that the university and state authorities appear to have withheld full documentation in these cases from the dismissed professors, in violation of state and university regulations. The professors have therefore been hampered in appealing their dismissals or defending themselves effectively in pending legal cases. We ask that all documents relevant to the cases of the individuals listed above be released immediately to each of them and that they be reinstated in their positions pending legal review.

We respectfully request that your government publicly clarify information regarding the whereabouts and well-being of the jailed professors. In addition, we request to be informed of any evidence to suggest that they have committed any offense that is recognizable criminal according to international standards. In the absence of such evidence, we urge that they be immediately released. We urge your government to allow them regular access to family visits and legal representation. We further request that independent human rights monitors be allowed to observe the trials. We respectfully request that your government ensure that these cases be settled in accordance with principles of academic freedom, freedom of speech, and freedom of association.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,


Anne H. Betteridge
Executive Director

AHB/sp

cc:

Said Kasymov, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Buritosh Mustafayev, Procurator General

Tursunoi Eshimbetova, Chair, Human Rights Committee of the Uzbekistan Supreme Soviet

Mokhammadjon Dekhganov, Deputy Chief of the Tashkent GUVB

Ubaidulla Mingbaev, Chair, Supreme Court of Uzbekistan

Strobe Talbot, Ambassador at Large to the Commonwealth of Independent States

Henry Clarke, Ambassador to Uzbekistan