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UZBEKISTAN: Religious prisoner makes formal torture complaint

By Igor Rotar, Forum 18

Laziz Saidov, a Muslim who is under arrest apparently just for being devout, has made a formal written complaint to the Uzbek Prosecutor General, Rashid Kadyrov, stating that the police used torture to obtain a confession of possessing leaflets from the banned Hizb-ut-Tahir party, Forum 18 News Service has learnt. Saidov, who is still in jail, states that the police manacled his arms and legs, and beat him on the shins and head until he agreed to sign a confession. The head of the detention cells where Saidov is being held, Panzhi Nazarov, suggested to Forum 18 that "maybe he [Saidov] was beaten up in Guzar rather than here?" and said that he could not either confirm or refute information that some Muslims had been tortured.

Laziz Saidov, a Muslim from Guzar district 40 kilometres (25 miles) south of Karshi [Qarshi], has made a formal written complaint against being tortured to Uzbekistan's Prosecutor General, Rashid Kadyrov, Forum 18 News Service has learnt. Saidov is in temporary detention in Karshi, apparently for being a devout Muslim, and states in his complaint that investigators forced him under torture to confess to keeping leaflets in his home published by the banned radical Islamic Hizb-ut-Tahrir party, according to human rights activist Tulkin Karayev.

In Saidov's formal complaint, he states that the police manacled his arms and legs, and beat him on the shins and head until he agreed to sign a confession (see F18News 6 August 2004 http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=388).

This is not the first report known to Forum 18 of torture being used against the many Muslims arrested after the terrorist attacks being tortured in Karshi's temporary cells. During a hearing at Kashkadarya regional criminal court on 28 July, Azim Kambarov told Judge Nurilla Ziyadullayev that he had been severely beaten during the investigation and that his false teeth had been smashed several months previously (see F18News 6 August 2004 http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=388). Judge Ziyadullayev banned journalists and human rights activists from attending the trial.

Laziz Saidov was arrested along with three friends (Ilkhom Gafarov, Bakhrom Khalmuradov and Ubaidulo Nasirov) on 3 April, a separate group of Muslims from Kamashi district, some 100 kilometres (60 miles) south-east of Karshi, being arrested on 4 April. The police claimed to have found leaflets published by Hizb-ut-Tahrir in all their homes, but the accused Muslims, accused under six articles of the Criminal Code, claimed the leaflets were planted. (An outline of Hizb-ut-Tahir's aims is given in F18News 29 October 2003 http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=170.)

Tulkin Karayev maintains that the detainees are simply devout Muslims, and that they have not engaged in any terrorist activity. He estimates that more than 100 people have been arrested. Mass arrests of devout Muslims followed the terrorist attacks in Tashkent at the end of March and beginning of April in Karshi region (see F18News 13 April 2004 http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=298 and 4 June 2004 http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=334).

On 26 August, Forum 18 spoke to the head of the detention cells in Karshi, Panzhi Nazarov, by telephone. Nazarov admitted that Laziz Saidov was being held in cells in Karshi, but said he knew nothing about Saidov's confession having been obtained under torture. "Maybe he was beaten up in Guzar rather than here?" Nazarov suggested. Nazarov also said that the court case against Saidov and his associates would establish whether the confessions had been obtained from the accused under torture. He told Forum 18 that he could neither confirm nor refute information about some Muslims being tortured.

For more background information see Forum 18's Uzbekistan religious freedom survey at http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=105

A printer-friendly map of Uzbekistan is available at

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/atlas/index.html?Parent=asia&Rootmap=uzbeki>

If you need to contact F18News, please email us at:
f18news @ editor.forum18.org

Forum 18
Postboks 6603
Rodeløkka
N-0502 Oslo
NORWAY