



## United States Mission to the OSCE

### **Statement on Rule of Law in Uzbekistan**

As delivered by Deputy Chief of Mission Gary Robbins  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
February 9, 2012

The United States wishes to express its serious concern about a number of judicial cases in Uzbekistan that raise issues about the government's adherence to its OSCE commitments on the rule of law and procedural due process. The cases are those of Muhammad Bekjanov, Akzam Turgunov, Abdulaziz Dadakhanov and Dilmurad Saiid, all currently in prison.

In the case of Mr. Bekjanov, the 57-year-old former editor of the "Erk" newspaper was sentenced in August 1999 to 15 years in prison on charges related to his alleged involvement in a series of bombings in Tashkent in 1999. His sentence was shortened in December 2003 under the terms of the annual amnesty, and Mr. Bekjanov was due to be released in April 2012. However, on January 18, a court in Kashkadaryo region sentenced him to an additional five years' incarceration for failure to heed the lawful orders of prison authorities. After more than 12 years without a reprimand, Mr. Bekjanov allegedly violated internal prison rules four times in the course of four months.

In the case of Mr. Turgunov, the 59-year-old public defender and human rights activist from Karakalpakstan was sentenced in October 2008 to 10 years in prison on charges of extortion. Mr. Turgunov reportedly has experienced severe weight loss and deteriorating health. In the case of Abdulaziz Dadakhanov, the 33-year-old former exchange student at Fairfield University in Connecticut was sentenced in February 2009 to eight years in prison on charges related to his alleged participation in the "Nur" religious organization.

Finally, in the case of Dilmurad Saiid, which we have raised on previous occasions, the journalist was sentenced in 2009 to 12-and-one-half years' incarceration on extortion and forgery charges following a closed trial. Mr. Saiid was a marked critic of corruption and abuse of power by local authorities. His wife and daughter were later killed in an automobile accident as they traveled to visit him in prison.

The United States has raised these cases bilaterally with the Government of Uzbekistan and takes this opportunity of peer review in the Permanent Council to urge the Government of Uzbekistan to provide each of these individuals, and all those whose cases we have raised in the past, access to fair legal proceedings, consistent with Uzbekistan's law and its commitment to international standards on the rule of law. We further urge the Government of Uzbekistan to conduct these proceedings with full transparency and to investigate all alleged irregularities. We also would encourage the Government of Uzbekistan to consider the release of these individuals on humanitarian grounds and/or within the framework of the ongoing amnesty announced on December 5, 2011 in connection with the 20th anniversary of Uzbekistan's independence.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.