

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 24, 2014

His Excellency Islam Karimov
President of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Dear President Karimov:

Over the past decade we have appreciated the cooperation of your government on issues related to Afghanistan. However, while relations between our countries have progressed, significant impediments remain. It is for this reason that we write again to express our concern regarding the continued detention of five political prisoners in Uzbekistan. This letter serves as a follow-up to our previous letters in June 2013 and May 2014.

As we have stated previously, the detention of all five prisoners appears to be politically motivated and each of them have been characterized as prisoners of conscience by internationally respected organization like the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Human Rights Watch, Freedom Now, Reporters Without Borders, and the Committee to Protect Journalists. The State Department has also raised the cases of several of these individuals in its annual Human Rights Report. All five reportedly suffer from poor health brought on by their time in prison and a lack of adequate medical attention. Over the past few years, Uzbekistan has worked to build a closer relationship with the United States, a trend we would like to see sustained particularly in light of next month's annual bilateral consultation meetings. Unfortunately, the lack of progress toward resolving these cases is an impediment to further cooperation between our two countries.

Akzam Turgunov, a public defender and human rights advocate, has been imprisoned since 2008 on alleged charges of extortion. The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has declared his incarceration a violation of international law and called for his release. Mr. Turgunov, who for much of his detention was forced to work long hours in a work camp, continues to face health problems in prison at the age of 62.

Dilmurod Saidov, a journalist and member of a prominent human rights society, has been imprisoned since 2009 on alleged charges of extortion and forgery. The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has also declared his incarceration a violation of international law. After years in prison, Mr. Saidov suffers from acute tuberculosis and was placed in isolation for more than a week in 2013 just for passing a letter to his relatives.

Salijon Abdurakhmanov, a prominent journalist who reported on social and economic justice issues, as well as corruption and human rights, has been imprisoned on alleged drug charges since 2008. His case has been raised repeatedly by the State Department and the OSCE and a petition was filed on his behalf to the United Nations Human Rights Committee. His family has reported that he suffers from health problems and that his health has deteriorated while in prison. International monitors also have been denied access to Mr. Abdurakhmanov, raising expressed increased concern about his health.

Muhammad Bekjanov, a journalist, was sentenced in 1999 to 15 years in prison on terrorism related charges. He was due to be released in April 2013, but was sentenced to an additional five years for alleged failure to follow prison procedures. Mr. Bekjanov is known to be one of the world's longest-imprisoned journalists. His health has also deteriorated significantly over the past decade and a half.

Bobomurod Razzokov, a farmer and head of the Ezgulik human rights organization, was sentenced to four years in prison on accusations of facilitating the trafficking of a woman into prostitution. Razzokov's lawyer claims that Uzbek security services had pressured the woman into bringing charges against him. The 62 year-old maintains that the charges were politically motivated due to his human rights activities, and human rights organizations allege serious due process violations.

Once again, we ask that you immediately release these individuals on humanitarian grounds. This would help to further relations between our countries.

Sincerely,

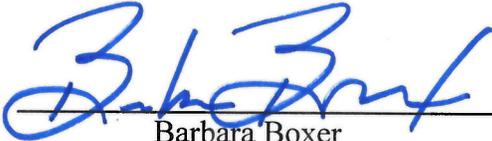

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

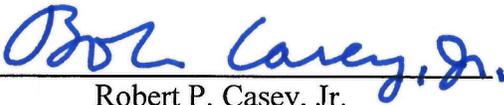

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