



Press Statement

**Sean McCormack, Spokesman**

Washington, DC

October 27, 2008

## **Uzbek Activists Sentenced**

Uzbek human rights activist Akzam Turgunov was sentenced on October 23, to 10 years in prison on charges of extortion. Credible allegations have been raised that Mr. Turgunov was tortured with boiling water in pre-trial detention, resulting in serious injury. On October 10, independent journalist Salijon Abdurakhmonov was also sentenced to 10 years in prison on charges of drug trafficking. We are deeply disappointed about the serious deficiencies of due process in both cases and about the allegations of torture.

The Turgunov and Abdurakhmonov cases are particularly disturbing given the Government of Uzbekistan's recent decisions in late September and early October to drop religious extremism charges against Protestant Airmurat Khayburahmaniov in Karakalpakstan, and to release from custody human rights activists Dilmurud Mukhiddinov and Mamarajab Nazarov. The United States welcomes these releases, but we have serious concerns about Uzbekistan's shortcomings with due process, media freedom, and the human rights situation overall.

The United States urges the Government of Uzbekistan to release immediately these and other jailed human rights defenders, to allow human rights activists and independent journalists to function in Uzbekistan without fear of harassment or retribution, and to uphold Uzbekistan's commitments on internationally accepted norms of human rights to which it has formally subscribed.

**2008/914**

Released on October 27, 2008

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