Briefing ahead of the EU-Uzbekistan Human Rights Dialogue

June 2025

Introduction

Since the last EU-Uzbekistan Human Rights Dialogue, civic freedoms have remained restricted and human rights defenders, independent journalists, bloggers and others who voice criticism of the government have continued to be at risk of imprisonment and other reprisals. The Uzbekistani authorities have increasingly suppressed media freedoms, including by shutting down information platforms and expanding the list of prohibited materials.

Below are summaries of our key concerns and recommendations to the EU on thematic issues stemming from our monitoring. We ask you to particularly emphasize these issues in your dialogue with the Uzbekistani delegation, as well as to raise the individual cases mentioned in this briefing paper.

Key institutional developments in the last year

On 27 October 2024, Uzbekistan held elections to the Oliy Majlis, the Uzbekistani parliament, in which, despite promises of an election marked by "strong competition", no genuine opposition parties were registered.[1] In a speech[2] during the first session of the newly elected Oliy Majlis, the President stated[3] that he intends to "revive the opposition".[4]

[1] https://www.rferl.org/a/uzbekistan-mirziyoev-parliamentary-elections-monitors/33176216.html
[2] https://www.asiaplustj.info/en/news/centralasia/20241119/uzbek-president-pledges-to-revive-parliamentary-opposition
[3] https://www.asiaplustj.info/en/news/centralasia/20241119/uzbek-president-pledges-to-revive-parliamentary-opposition
[4] https://www.asiaplustj.info/en/news/centralasia/20241119/uzbek-president-pledges-to-revive-parliamentary-opposition

In November 2024, the Senate (Upper Chamber of the Oliy Majlis) extended the mandate of the Ombudsperson, who now has the power to propose legislative initiatives to "reinforce the protection of human rights and liberties" to the President, Cabinet of Ministers, and the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis.[5]

Freedom of peaceful assembly

In December 2024, the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis approved amendments to Article 244 of the Criminal Code regarding "mass riots".[6] There are concerns that the amendments could be used to punish the preparation, training, and participation of legitimate peaceful protests in the country, violating Uzbekistan's international human rights commitments. Domestic legislation already previously criminalised organising and participating in mass riots but the amendments expanded legislative provisions to punish organising training for protests (such as "acquiring knowledge, practical skills and methods for organizing unrest, handling weapons, explosive devices or other dangerous substances").[7] Penalties now include fines of 112.5-225 million Uzbek soms (the equivalent of approximately 8000-9000 Euros), correctional labour for up to three years, and imprisonment for from five to seven years. The amendments also introduced criminal liability for financing mass riots to 10-15 years. The new legislation also includes a clause exempting individuals from criminal liability if they notify the authorities about the planned riots and assist in uncovering and identifying the people involved. According to the authorities, such measures were introduced to "update national legislation to address modern challenges" and to protect national security interests.

Aftermath of the July 2022 Karakalpakstan events

There are serious concerns that lawyer, journalist and human rights defender **Dauletmurat Tazhimuratov,** who is serving a 16-year sentence on a series of charges initiated in retaliation for his peaceful participation in the 2022 mass protests in Karakalpakstan is being regularly subjected to beatings, insults and other forms of ill-treatment in prison by prison officials as well as by fellow prisoners. In March 2025, his lawyer publicly raised concerns about Tazhimuratov's treatment in prison as well as his general health and well-being and in May there were further reports of him being ill-treated. Human rights defenders and international experts have repeatedly raised serious concerns about the case, and the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has deemed[8] his detention unlawful, calling for his immediate release.[9]

On 1 December 2024, Russian journalist and documentary film maker **Alexey Pivovarov**, his crew and a journalist from the independent Uzbekistani media outlet Hook.report were detained in Nukus, the capital city of the Autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan in western

[5] https://senat.uz/ru/plenary-sessions/post-2895
[6] https://hook.report/2024/12/riots/
[7] https://www.gazeta.uz/en/2024/12/31/parliament/
[8] https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/detention-wg/opinions/session101/a-hrc-wgad-62-2024-uzbekistan-advance-edite.pdf
[9] For further information on Tazhimuratov's case, refer to recent Civicus Monitor reports tracking fundamental freedoms in Uzbekistan. The reports were jointly prepared by AHRCA and IPHR.

Uzbekistan, while they were filming in Uzbekistan.[10] During their detention, agents of the Nukus Main Department of Internal Affairs seized all the filming materials and questioned them on who they spoke with and what they filmed in Karakalpakstan. The film crew was reportedly forced to hand over two flash drives of video footage before being released and allowed to return to Tashkent. Media reports[11] indicate that the detention may have been in reprisal for an interview[12] with the younger brother of Dauletmurat Tazhimuratov, a lawyer and blogger who is serving a 16 year prison sentence for allegedly playing a leading role in organising the July 2022 protests in Nukus.[13]

Due to the closed judicial process and the secrecy surrounding cases linked to Karakalpakstan, it is difficult to establish the exact number of individuals subjected to politically-motivated prosecution following the July 2022 events. Turkmen Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights reported on 10 December 2024 that based on the findings of an expert group of six independent international human rights defenders, as of 30 June 2024, there were at least 49 political prisoners serving prison terms in connection with the July 2022 events.[14] The individuals are civil and religious activists linked to Karakalpakstan and 33 of them participated in the protests in Karakalpakstan in July 2022 Karakalpakstan.[15]

On 26 December 2024, the Special Commission established following the 2022 events presented a new report to the Senate and the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis stating that since July 2022, 943 people have been warned for committing offenses, 6135 people have been given administrative fines, and 2639 people have been sentenced to administrative detention in relation to the events in Karakalpakstan in 2022.[16] According to the Commission, 21 people died and 413 were injured. However, independent human rights activists have concluded, based on their own research as well as official information, that the real numbers of those killed or injured may be higher.[17] According to the Special Commission report, just three law enforcement officials have been held accountable for human rights violations, compared to nearly 10 000 protesters convicted for law infringements, with penalties ranging from warnings to imprisonment.[18] In August 2023, media reports stated that two police officers had been sentenced to seven years in prison on charges of torture, and that another police officer had been sentenced to three years in prison on charges of "abandonment resulting in death."[19] The commission's findings highlight the need for further, impartial and thorough investigations into the July 2022 events and for effective measures to hold all perpetrators, including high-ranking officials, accountable for violations.

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[10] https://hook.report/2024/12/arest-pivovarova/

[11] https://hook.report/2024/12/pivovarov/

[12] https://tmhelsinki.org/article/df7699d8-42b5-4a5b-ad6f-dce1a64b8f70

[13] https://iphronline.org/articles/uzbekistan-pressure-on-critical-voices-continues/

[14] https://tmhelsinki.org/article/8a55aed9-0a22-49ff-bc99-759cbbef053d

[15] See: https://mediazona.ca/article/2024/12/26/uz-karakalpakstan

[16] https://rus.ozodlik.org/a/komissiya-po-rassledovaniyu-nukusskih-sobytiy-predstavila-otchet-parlamentu-/33254621.html

[17] https://tmhelsinki.org/ru/article/c32dcb94-4b76-4942-a8a3-7a845fd3fed7

[18] https://parliament.gov.uz/news/nukus-voqealari-boyicha-tuzilgan-komissiya-axboroti-oliy-majlisga-taqdim-etildi

[19] https://rus.ozodi.org/a/32538641.html

Uzbekistani authorities request return of Karakalpakstanis to stand trial in Uzbekistan

On 17 April 2025, Nukus City Court sentenced **Rinat Utambetov** to two years and three months in prison for allegedly encroaching on the constitutional order and disseminating materials threatening public security (Article 159, Part 2 and Art. 244-1, Part 3, paragraphs "a", "g" of the Criminal Code).[20] He stood trial after being extradited from Kazakhstan, where he was detained in April 2024 after he reportedly withdrew his asylum request.[21] Some activist sources allege that Utambetov was never involved in Karakalpak opposition activities and the case against him is related to a post[22] made in July 2022 during the Nukus events on a private Telegram group of 10 residents of the village of Shortanbay in the Nukus district containing "prohibited video materials". The authors of this report were unable to independently verify this information.

In a positive development, **Akylbeq Muratbai**, Karakalpak activist who had been detained in February 2024 and was facing extradition to Uzbekistan on charges of "publicly calling for mass riots"[23], was released from pretrial detention in February 2025 after a year spent in an Almaty facility.[24] Nevertheless, as long as Muratbai remains in Kazakhstan and has not been granted asylum he remains at risk of refoulement to Uzbekistan.[25]

Recommendations:

- Ensure that an **independent investigation**, with the participation of independent international experts, is carried out into the July 2022 events in Karakalpakstan and the reported human rights violations and that those responsible for violations are held accountable.
- Ensure that the allegations of torture in detention of **Dauletmurat Tazhimuratov** and others charged in this context are impartially and thoroughly investigated by an independent body, that those suspected of being responsible are brought to justice and that the conclusions are made publicly available.

Freedom of expression

In November 2024, the press service of the Supreme Court published information stating that over 30 000 citizens were charged with slander and insult in Uzbekistan that year.[26] All of them were fined; with over 200 also having been sentenced to terms of imprisonment.[27] There are

[20] https://tmhelsinki.org/ru/article/e648d288-1eb6-4853-bf34-1e5e0eafe8e4
[21] https://tmhelsinki.org/article/3ec94d67-8682-43c1-a447-89b45b3f2255
[22] https://tmhelsinki.org/article/3ec94d67-8682-43c1-a447-89b45b3f2255
[23] See more about this case in our previous CIVICUS Monitor update : https://iphronline.org/articles/uzbekistan-pressure-on-critical-voices-continues/
[24] https://bureau.kz/publ-all/sobstvennaya_informaciya/god-posle-aresta/
[25] For further information on the targeting of Karakalpakstanis following the July 2022 events, refer to our CIVICUS monitor updates.
[26] https://upl.uz/obshestvo/46698-news.html
[27] https://rus.ozodlik.org/a/uzbekistan-kleveta-oskorblenie/33222658.html

allegations that many were targeted to punish them for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression.

International human rights standards clearly stipulate that imprisonment is never an appropriate penalty for defamation, and that public officials should be prepared to tolerate more, rather than less, criticism, given the importance of allowing effective public scrutiny of government actions. Defamation should be decriminalised - as criminalisation runs counter to international human rights standards - and replaced with civil liability and reasonable and proportional civil sanctions, following procedures which respect due process. Remedies must be proportionate such as the right of reply or correction (instead of fines, for example) which should be prioritised according to international standards.

Also In November 2024, the head of the "Centre for Spirituality and Enlightenment of Uzbekistan", which was set up by Presidential decree in 2017 to educate young people "in the spirit of the national idea and devotion to the Motherland", announced that "soon" all media products published in Uzbekistan will be subjected to a "spiritual examination".[28] This would include examining the compliance with moral standards and values of media materials, especially local and foreign TV series, cartoons, films, songs and clips. As reported by Radio Ozodlik, materials that do not meet the set criteria will not be allowed to be published or broadcasted in Uzbekistani media. Although forbidden by the Constitution, such reviews and bans of materials would be equivalent to censorship according to human rights groups. Faced with backlash over this announcement, the Centre issued a statement justifying these measures "to preserve national identity".

This recent development appears to be part of a trend to increase government control over publications and is consistent with proposed legislation, such as the draft Information Code, which aims to regulate laws on the media, access to information and on protecting children from harmful information.[29]

In recent years, human rights groups have repeatedly raised concerns that in Uzbekistan closed court hearings are often used in cases against those who speak out on human rights or other sensitive issues. Concerns about upholding fair trial standards in such cases were heightened when, on 25 February 2025, the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis passed a draft law on introducing criminal liability for disclosing information from closed court hearings in its first reading.[30] The deputy chairperson of the Supreme Court reportedly stated that this draft law was developed in response to concerns raised by the Presidential Administration regarding issues in judicial practice, such as participants in closed court hearings disclosing information without the judge's permission. Article 19 of the Criminal Procedural Code allows cases to be held in closed court sessions, but the court may allow the presence of close relatives of the defendant and the victim, as well as other individuals, warning them of

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28 https://rus.ozodlik.org/a/%D0%B4%D1%83%D1%85%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%8F-%D1%8D%D0%BA%D1%81%D0%BF%D0%B5%D1%80%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D0%B2-%D1%83%D0%B7%D0%B1%D0%B5%D0%BA%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B5-%D1%84%D0%B8%D0%BB%D1%8C%D0%BC%D1%8B-%D0%BF%D0%B5%D1%81%D0%BD%D0%B8-%D0%B8-%D0%BA%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%BF%D1%8B-%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BF%D0%B5%D1%80%D1%8C-%D0%B1%D1%83%D0%B4%D1%83%D1%82-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%80%D1%8F%D1%82%D1%8C-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BB%D1%8C%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D1%8C-%D0%B8-%D0%BD%D0%B5%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BE%D0%B9%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D1%8C/33208430.html

29 https://parliament.gov.uz/news/nukus-voqealari-boyicha-tuzilgan-komissiya-axboroti-oliy-majlisga-taqdim-etildi

30 https://www.gazeta.uz/en/2025/03/04/closed-trials/

liability for disclosing case details. However, according to those who initiated the new draft law, current legislation regulating courtroom order lacked specific provisions defining liability for such disclosures of information. The bill thus aims to explicitly prohibit disclosing case details and to introduce criminal liability for violations. At the time of writing, the proposed penalties are not publicly available.

Limiting access to critical reporting

There were allegations that over the past years, the Uzbekistani authorities have selectively targeted critical bloggers and reported violations of copyright to YouTube in order to force them to take down their videos. As a result of YouTube's policy that after three such warnings channels are to be closed, many bloggers are faced with losing their channels and fellowship. For example, YouTube closed three of **Kamiljon Shakirov's** channels citing copyright violations (see further information about the blogger below).

For similar reasons, two YouTube channels belonging to blogger and human rights activist **Alisher Abidov**, who lives in Norway and is known under the pseudonym "Uzbek-Viking", were shut down. The blogger raises sensitive issues and discusses human rights violations. In his six months of blogging Abidov has become one of the most popular bloggers. On 8 April 2025, he received a message from a follower, who said that he had recently arrived from Turkey to the Tashkent airport and had had his phone checked by a counterintelligence officer at the airport. When the officer saw that the follower was subscribed to "Uzbek-Viking", he reportedly forced him to unsubscribe and promise never to contact the "traitors of the motherland".

AHRCA has increasingly been receiving information that when citizens who have lived abroad for a long time go through passport control in Uzbekistan, their mobile phones are checked to see who they are subscribed to on social networks. Those who subscribe to accounts of critics of the government are reportedly detained, and in some cases not only forced to unsubscribe, but also to sign a pledge never to contact "enemies of the people," including political emigrants and opinion leaders.

Internet restrictions

In January 2025, the Supreme Court of Uzbekistan published an updated list of some 1400 materials recognised as containing extremist and terrorist ideas. Last year's list featured some 800 materials. Banned materials include Facebook pages, Instagram accounts, pages on other social media platforms, Telegram and Youtube channels, as well as websites.[31] According to the "Law on combating extremism", the production, storage, distribution, or display of any prohibited materials is subject to criminal liability under the Criminal Code.[32] The responsibility of identifying prohibited materials is that of the Committee on Religious Affairs, the State Security Service, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Agency for Information and Mass Communications.

New law on "undesirable foreigners"

On 15 November 2024, President Mirziyoyev signed into force amendments to the law "On the legal status of foreign citizens and stateless persons in Uzbekistan" which introduced a

[31] https://rus.ozodlik.org/a/v-uzbekistane-rasshiren-spisok-internet-materialov-priznannyh-v-ekstremistskimi/33268603.html
[32] https://www.gazeta.uz/en/2025/01/09/content/

mechanism for recognizing foreigners as undesirable for stay in the country. According to the amendments[33], foreign citizens and stateless persons whose actions or public statements contradict the sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of Uzbekistan, provoke interstate, social, national, racial and religious hostility or discredit the honor and dignity of the people are regarded as “undesirable foreigners”. Human rights groups have voiced their concerns regarding this new law, stating that “these amendments represent a flagrant violation of international standards on freedom of expression and pose a serious risk of isolating the country”.[34]

Cases of ongoing pressure on journalists and human rights defenders

Human rights defender and journalist **Sharifa (Sharifakhon) Madrakhimova**, winner of the 2025 Front Line Defenders Award for Human Rights Defenders at Risk,[35] was unable to travel to Dublin to attend the award ceremony on 22 May 2025. The awarded human rights activist Madrakhimova herself reported[36] "I received an envelope with my passport from the Irish embassy. And I discovered that on the back cover of the passport and the last few pages there were burnt marks. A passport like this must be replaced, I will not be able to cross the border with it." According to the international NGO Front Line Defenders, on 7 May 2025, Sharifa Madrakhimova received her passport with an Irish visa at her home address in Kokand via DHL. However, the back cover of the passport, where the biometric chip is located, as well as several other pages, were damaged by burns that were allegedly deliberately caused after being intercepted during delivery. Although Madrakhimova applied for a new passport, it was not delivered in time for her to travel. Madrakhimova has previously been subjected to intimidation and harassment by supporters of the Uzbekistani government, including an incident in April 2024 when she was attacked near her home by a pro-government blogger and another unidentified man.[37] She reported the attack to police, naming the blogger as one of the culprits. However, law enforcement agencies concluded that no crime had been committed. Two days later, the blogger posted a defamatory video about her on YouTube.

Additionally, on 23 May 2025, Mirabad Interdistrict Civil Court ruled[38] **Abdulrahman Tashanov**, Chairman of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan "Ezgulik", should pay compensation to two teachers from Tashkent State Law University - R. Altiev and O. Narziev - after they argued that he had damaged their honour and dignity. The court ordered Tashanov to pay 50 million soums in compensation, instructed him to delete his post on the social network entitled "I feel sorry for you, gentlemen"[39], and which relate to Tashanov’s public

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[33] https://rus.ozodlik.org/a/nezhelatelniye-grazhadane-noviye-pravila-mogut-izmenit-zhizn-inostrancev/33210584.html

[34] https://iphronline.org/articles/uzbekistan-international-human-rights-organisations-call-on-president-mirziyoyev-to-veto-undesirable-foreigners-law/

[35] https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Bry_oF4xHCe77UdCaX_ftehMXlV3tVj8/edit

[36] https://rus.ozodlik.org/a/pravozaschitnitsa-iz-uzbekistana-ne-smogla-vyletetj-na-tseremoniyu-vrucheniya-premii-v-dubline-iz-za-isporchennogo-pasporta/33422555.html

[37] https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/uzbekistan-pressure-on-bloggers-and-journalists-continues-including-on-karakalpak-activists/

[38] https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2025/05/26/sud/

[39] https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10226968508910551&id=1588713286&rdid=cw6si8cIzwzjhtQu#

defence of journalist Rukhsora Gafurova's investigation into bank fraud. The court also instructed Tashanov to issue a public apology to the teachers. The court hearings were held behind closed doors, journalists and diplomats were not allowed to attend. During the trial, the principle of equality of arms was not respected. The court issued a guilty verdict despite the fact that the expert opinion issued by the Center for Expertise at the Agency for Information and Mass Communications stated that Tashanov's comments on social networks did not contain insults or derogatory statements. However, the court nevertheless found that Tashanov's statements of personal opinion violated the law. Tashanov intends to appeal this court decision.

On 28 May 2025, Shaykhantakhur Inter District Court ruled on a lawsuit filed by journalist **Anora Sadykova** against Mirsaid Khaidarov, a public relations official for Tashkent region Mayor (Hokim) Zoir Mirzaev. Sodikova complained against Khaidarov's articles which referred to journalists as "journalist whores", and claimed that Sadykova was using the "Uzdiplomat" website that she heads for financial blackmail and serving Western interests through a series of critical publications.

The Judge ruled that Khaidarov's articles using the phrase "journalist whores" was an insult, but determined that it was not directed at Sadykova. The ruling disregarded the findings of the linguistic expert assessment, which stated that Khaidarov's insults were directed specifically at Sadykova and that they constituted a serious insult to human dignity and damaged her professional reputation. Sadykova reacted to the court ruling by saying "I came to court with my last faith in the fairness of Uzbek courts and the protection of the press in the country, but now I want to find the truth through international bodies."

Anora Sadykova spoke out on this matter: "Yes, in any country you can find some form of pressure and censorship against the press, because our industry is often a battlefield. But when anyone can call journalists traitors, and the judicial system stands by and watches, it is better for Uzbekistan to fall out of the press freedom rating, in my opinion. In any case, even in countries with the lowest press freedom rating, the press and journalists are not so trampled [...] "I advise colleagues [...] to look back [...] journalism is collapsing, our names are being defamed. Today, only three journalists participated in the trial of a brave girl who did not agree to be called names."

A group of civil society activists, including journalists **Ilyos Safarov, Anora Sadykova, and activist Rasul Kusherbaev** and others, faced accusations in a video posted to social media about receiving funding from American donors, allegedly without the approval of the Uzbekistani authorities. The video posted, which mentioned the journalists by name, led to increased pressure on them from state officials, including judges.

Journalist and blogger Ilyos Safarov commented: "Trolling against journalists, bloggers and activists is intensifying. From the most personal problems to family, loved ones, everyone is being attacked for the purpose of slander and blackmail. Unfortunately, they are not investigated by the government and our appeals remain unanswered."

Ongoing pressure on bloggers

The 18 December 2024 marked two years since 62-year-old lawyer and blogger **Shahida Salomova** was forcibly institutionalised in a psychiatric ward after accusing the President and his relatives of nepotism and corruption on her Telegram account, as well as posting a picture of the President's son-in-law Otabek Umarov with a woman she described as his second

(unofficial) wife in 2022.[40] Every six months, the medical commission extends Salomova's term of detention, without justifying its decision, and all attempts by her lawyer to appeal this decision are ignored. Salomova suffers from diabetes, asthma, a chronic lung condition, and a disease affecting brain function.

On 26 December 2024, the Bektemir District Criminal Court of Tashkent sentenced **Gayrat Dustov to** 15 days of administrative detention.[41] There were allegations that he was punished for exercising his right to peacefully expressing his opinion when complaining about restrictions on the working hours of gas stations on social media three days earlier. The restrictions were introduced by the Ministry of Energy in connection with cold weather conditions in December. In a video that went viral on social media, Gayrat Dustov, a minibus driver, expressed his dissatisfaction with the situation, saying that the restrictions and long queues at gas stations prevented him from working and providing for his family. The man was found guilty of petty hooliganism under Article 183 of the Code of Administrative Offenses. According to the case materials, the basis for initiating the administrative case was a complaint from an employee of the station, who claimed that Dustov insulted him. This case sparked widespread support among the Uzbek-speaking community in the country, many of whom came to support him during his trial. It is believed that the large public support he received protected him from criminal prosecution.

Religious blogger **Fazilhoja Arifhojaev**, who was sentenced to seven and a half years' restricted freedom in relation to a Facebook post in March 2021 and was released conditionally in December 2023, has reportedly been subjected to ill-treatment by officials of the probation service on several occasions since being released. More information on Fazilhoja Arifhojaev's case can be found in IPHR and AHRCA's July 2024 report on bloggers.[42] Officials are reportedly preventing him from finding work, prohibiting him from using the internet and threatening him with arrest. He has also been reportedly subjected to beating by probation officers and has reported attempting to take his life due to the constant harassment.

Writer and journalist **Karimberdi Turamurad** works for the Bekajon newspaper. He has written books[43] and film scripts, including "Gung Qiz", "Sindoshlari Yoqodam", "Zhiyda Guli" and others. On 15 May 2025, he was returning from Turkey, where he had been looking after his sick sister, to Uzbekistan. While in Turkey, he hosted a programme on AzonGlobal[44] interpreting hadiths,[45] but avoided speaking about sensitive political issues. He also worked on a programme[46] about the deportation of the Crimean Tatars in May 1944 to Uzbekistan. Upon return to Samarkand after Turkey, he was reportedly summoned to meet representatives of the State Security Service of the Samarkand region for questioning.

Death of a blogger in penal colony

[40] https://iphronline.org/articles/uzbekistan-pressure-on-critical-voices-continues/
[41] https://rus.ozodlik.org/a/v-uzbekistane-muzhchinu-arestovali-na-15-sutok-posle-kritiki-energokrizisa/33259974.html
[42] https://iphronline.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/iphr-ahrca-blogger-report-july-2024.pdf
[43] https://ziyouz.uz/ozbek-nasri/karimberdi-toramurod/%20
[44] https://azon.global/
[45] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TaD2muobERA&ab_channel=KarimberdiTo%27interpreting
[46] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzT8IC_ccxc&ab_channel=AzonGlobal%D0%BD%D0%20%B0%D1%80%D1%83%D1%81%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BC

On 17 February 2025, well-known Karakalpak blogger **Mustafa Tursynbayev** died in a penal colony in the Tashkent region, where he was serving a five-year sentence after a trial behind closed doors, according to media reports.[47] Tursynbayev was detained in November 2023 along with blogger Salamat Seitmuratov and there were allegations that he was convicted on trumped-up charges in retaliation for his independent journalism and publications in the Karakalpak language about social issues in the region. His detention is unrelated to the 2022 protests in Karakalpakstan. Tursynbayev established the popular independent video channel "Nukus Online" in Karakalpakstan, which had over 150 000 subscribers.

The organization Via Serica, a Karakalpak diaspora organization based in the USA, reported that Tursynbayev died after a wall collapsed on him while he was working on a prison construction site. Although Tursynbayev's death was officially recorded as accidental, a criminal case was opened under Article 257 ("Violation of labour protection rules"). International human rights organisations have repeatedly called on the Uzbekistani authorities to thoroughly investigate deaths in custody and improve prison conditions. This is the third reported death of a Karakalpak political prisoner in the last two years.

Pressure on Uzbekistani bloggers and journalists abroad

Reportedly, in recent months Uzbekistani authorities have brought charges against several bloggers living abroad and put them on the wanted list after they had criticized members of the family of President Mirziyoyev and other high-ranking officials. Authorities have also persecuted journalists and bloggers who continued their critical reporting from abroad in other ways.

In autumn 2024, bloggers **Kamiljon Shakirov and Sardor Safarboyev**, who are known under the pseudonyms "Sardor Gangster" and are based in Sweden and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), respectively, were charged in absentia with "insult" (Articles 140, part 2 of the Criminal Code) and "incitement of national, racial, ethnic or religious hatred" (Art. 156, part 2). While their videos include harsh criticism of the authorities, often expressed in slang or rough language, there are no calls amounting to incitement of national, racial, ethnic or religious hatred. In addition, Shakirov reported on 27 March 2025 that unknown individuals had dumped broken glass and construction waste at the gates of his house in Tashkent. Offensive insults were written on the gates about him. Shortly before the incident, Shakirov had criticized the practice of torture and corruption, the persecution of bloggers, and other human rights violations in Uzbekistan on social media. He has received anonymous death threats.

Earlier this year, blogger and former law enforcement officer Kazim Usmanov of the Gazab Mushti channel[48] (run together with Alisher Abidov), who lives in the United States as a political refugee, was put on a wanted list on the website of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) of Uzbekistan and the MIA of Karakalpakstan under Article 159 "encroachment on the constitutional order of Uzbekistan", in a move believed to be in retaliation for his online criticism of the authorities. Usmanov reported that in April 2025, after posting a video critical of the Presidential reforms in Uzbekistan, officers of the State Security Service went to his home in Tashkent and forced his wife to write a statement requesting divorce and testify against him. Under threat of arrest, she and their children are now forbidden from communicating with Usmanov. In addition, the officers reportedly intimidated his mother, and called his close friends and neighbours in Uzbekistan for questioning, most recently on 18 May. Usmanov also lost

[47] https://rus.azattyq.org/a/karakalpakskiy-bloger-mustafa-tursynbaev-umer-v-uzbekskoy-tyurme/33321287.html
[48] https://www.youtube.com/@GazabMushti

access to his previous personal social media accounts on YouTube and Tik-Tok after posting the video.

Recently there have been reports of cases where authorities of foreign states allegedly cooperated with authorities of Uzbekistan to put pressure on critical journalists and bloggers - for example cases have been reported from Turkey and the UAE.

For example, on 13 October 2024, blogger Asliddin Kamol, who criticises corruption and nepotism in Uzbekistan, went missing at Dubai airport. On 16 October, it was reported that Kamol had been detained by UAE police at the request of Uzbekistan and interrogated.[49] Kamol used to collaborate with the blogger Abdukodir Muminov before Muminov was detained in Uzbekistan in February 2023 . After Muminov's detention Kamol fled Uzbekistan for fear of persecution. In an interview[50] given later to Radio Ozodlik, the blogger explained that upon returning from Georgia to Dubai, where he had been living for two years, he was not allowed to go through passport control. He was driven to an interrogation room, somewhere outside the airport, blindfolded, and his phone was taken away, after he had managed to inform friends of his situation. According to him, he was detained for five days. He reportedly demanded to see a lawyer and to be informed about the nature of the charges against him. When neither of these demands had been met by the second day, he went on hunger strike for three days. Kamol was interrogated by UAE officers about whom he had met in Georgia, why he had not returned to Uzbekistan, which country he cooperates with, what sources of income he has, and whether he or Abdukodir Muminov had any problems with Otabek Umarov, President Mirziyoyev's son-in-law. The last question convinced Kamol that he was detained and questioned on request of Uzbekistani security services. Kamol was released after five days and is currently in exile elsewhere. He reports that he is still receiving threats from people whom he believes to be officials of the Uzbekistani security services. Additionally, the administrator of his Telegram channel was detained recently, and Kamol lost access to this resource.

Ulugbek Ashur, Uzbekistani businessman and popular blogger who lives in Canada, reported not being allowed to enter Turkey when he was travelling for business some two years ago. Ashur covers political developments in Uzbekistan as well as social problems. There are allegations that the Turkish authorities acted on requests by the Uzbekistani authorities aimed at punishing him for criticising the government in his publications. Ashur filed a complaint with a court in Turkey, but the court ruled that the decision not to admit him into the country was lawful. Ashur is appealing the court decision, and has alleged that the Turkish authorities shared information from his Canadian passport with the authorities in Uzbekistan, thus putting him at risk of persecution in his new home.

Additionally, cases of pressure by Uzbekistani law enforcement authorities against journalists of Radio Ozodlik, the Uzbek service of Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), have been reported. For example, Uzbekistani citizen Lazizkhon Omilov, who writes under the name Aziz Nur, is a social media producer for Radio Ozodlik and a coordinator of the citizen journalism network. Omilov is based in Prague in the Czech Republic, where RFE/RL is located.[51]

[49] https://rus.ozodlik.org/a/33161310.html
[50] https://rus.ozodlik.org/a/33168458.html
[51] https://hackathon.rferl.org/mentorsdetail-lazizkhon-omilov.html

Uzbekistan officials informed Omilov's relatives that they are considering depriving Omilov of his Uzbek citizenship for his role in a series of Radio Ozodlik investigations into corruption allegations connected to Atabek Umarov, son-in-law of President Mirziyoyev. in a series of investigations.[52]

In addition, Tukhfatkhodja Shavkat oglu Anvarkhodjayev, whom the Radio Ozodlik investigations named as a close partner in Umarov's alleged corruption scheme, lodged a civil suit against Omilov and RFE/RL claiming that his honour, dignity and business reputation had been damaged. On 29 July 2024, Shaykhantakhur District Civil Court of Tashkent upheld the claims and awarded Anvarkhkodjayev compensation for moral damages. The court ordered Omilov and Radio Ozodlik to provide a refutation of the investigative reports within three days of the decision of 29 July 2024.

In addition to having to refute the results of their investigation, the defendants are required to pay the plaintiff moral damages of 100 million soums as well as cover 680 thousand soums of state duty fees and 34 thousand soums of postal expenses (in total the equivalent of some 6800 Euros). On 24 April 2025, Otabek Umarov's lawyers filed a lawsuit in a US court against RFE/RL.

Recommendations:

- Urge the authorities of Uzbekistan to decriminalize defamation and exclude imprisonment as a possible punishment from the Criminal Code. In line with Uzbekistan's obligations under international human rights law, defamation should be decriminalised and replaced with civil liability and reasonable and proportional civil sanctions, following procedures which respect due process.
- Raise concern at the draft law on disclosing information from closed court hearings that was passed by Parliament in its first reading on 25 February 2025 and remind the authorities of their obligation to ensure that trials are only held behind closed doors when this is strictly necessary and in line with the principles stipulated in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
- Raise concern at reports that bloggers, independent journalists and human rights defenders and family members have been subjected to harassment, intimidation and other forms of persecution in order to punish them for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression. (Case examples: Sharifa Madrakhimova, Karimberdi Taramurad, Asliddin Kamol, relatives of Kazim Usmanov, Lazizkhon Omilov).
- Immediately and unconditionally release lawyer and blogger Shakhida Salomova who is forcibly held at a psychiatric hospital in order to punish her for exercising her right to freedom of expression.

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[52] Here are the investigative reports in question, available in the Uzbek language: "Ozodlik Investigation: Has a Company Linked to Otabek Umarov Become a Gas Purifier?", 25 April 2024;
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o0Kz0wWIMBI&ab_channel=OzodlikRadiosi
- "Ozodlik investigation: how did a company associated with Otabek Umarov become a gas purifier?", posted on 26 April 2024;
https://www.ozodlik.org/a/kuyov-halqasi-gazdan-pul-qilishning-korrupsion-sxemasi/32921764.html
- Investigation: "Kuyov Halqasi: Gazdan Pul Qilishning Korrupsion Schemasi" ("Corruption Scheme for Making Money on Gas"), posted on 26 April 2024 https://www.ozodlik.org/a/32919008.html
References to the investigation in Russian on the Nastoyashchee vremya channel:
- "A Company Linked to Mirziyoyev's Son-in-Law Earned Millions on Gas Supplies to Uzbekistan | ASIA", posted on 25 April 2024
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B-Xqo2ZQaY0&ab_channel=%D0%9D%D0%B0%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%8F%D1%89%D0%B5%D0%B5%D0%92%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%BC%D1%8F.%D0%90%D0%B7%D0%B8%D1%8F

- Raise concern at allegations that the blogger Fazilhoja Arifhojaev has been subjected to harassment and beatings by probation officers; ensure that those reasonably suspected to be responsible are brought to justice.

Freedom of association

Restrictions on NGO activities

Foreign travel
From August 2025, representatives of NGOs registered in Uzbekistan will be required to notify the Ministry of Justice at least seven days in advance about international trips of their representatives, providing information about the grounds and purpose of the trip as well as the funding source. This is yet another example of increased surveillance and control over representatives of civil society in Uzbekistan.

Foreign funding
NGO activities continue to be restricted, and access to funding remains excessively difficult in Uzbekistan. In February 2025, a pro-government commentator proposed the adoption of a "foreign agent" law, saying it is needed to "control foreign financial flows" and "safeguard information sovereignty."[53] While no policymaker has formally initiated such legislation, this suggestion has heightened concerns about potential new restrictions. An NGO seeking to receive funds over the equivalent of 2800 EUR from foreign donors is required to seek permission from the branch of the Ministry of Justice, leading to cases of significant delays or refusals of small projects.

Recommendations:

Refrain from undue interference in the peaceful work of civil society organizations and raise concern at the requirement for NGOs to notify justice authorities ahead of international travel, which is expected to take effect in August 2025.

Torture and ill-treatment

Legal safeguards provided for in domestic legislation are not consistently implemented and cases of torture and other forms of ill-treatment continue to be reported. Although domestic legislation provides for swift access to a lawyer, in practice detainees are often held without contact to the outside world, particularly in the early stages of detention. Critics of the authorities, those accused of terrorism and involvement in banned organisations and homosexual men are at particular risk.

Often victims refrain from lodging complaints about torture or other forms of ill-treatment for fear of reprisals or because they do not believe that they can obtain justice. Allegations of

[53] https://politik.uz/novosti/zakon-ob-inoagentah-nuzhen-v-uzbekistane-bahtiyor-ergashev

torture and other forms of ill-treatment are typically not effectively investigated by the authorities and perpetrators are usually not punished. Judges frequently ignore visible injuries or disregard statements from defendants and their lawyers complaining about torture or ill-treatment - and fail to order a forensic examination. The complaints are also frequently not reflected in the court records.

There appears to be a lack of political will to establish an independent mechanism for the investigation of torture complaints, although this has been a key recommendation by UN treaty bodies for many years. In recent years, AHRCA learnt of cases where defendants who have been convicted to prison sentences on evidence obtained under duress, had limited success in appealing against their sentences, even once they were released from prison. The authorities refused their claims, citing the statute of limitations. Many victims have not been able to obtain a copy of the court documents or verdicts, further complicating their attempts to clear their names.

Case examples

On 18 June 2024, the head of Prison Colony Settlement No. 51 reportedly summoned Dmitry Ivanus, a prisoner with a disability, and beat him together with the deputy head of the colony. Allegedly, the reason for the ill-treatment was to punish Ivanus for telling another prisoner that he had been forced to testify against him. Ivanus was subsequently placed in a punishment cell for 10 days. Attempts by human rights activists to trigger an investigation into the allegations have been unsuccessful.

In recent years, AHRCA and IPHR have learnt of several cases where lawyers were not allowed to see his/her client. Officials claimed that the detainee refused the lawyer hired by his/ her relatives. Later it transpired that the detainee was not allowed to see the lawyer because he or she bore visible injuries sustained through torture and police wanted to cover up the crime. Examples of such cases include bloggers **Abdukadir Muminov**, **Otabek Sattori** and **Alexander Trofimov.** Without visible traces of torture, it is virtually impossible to get permission to undergo a forensic medical examination.

In another case, 30-year-old Denis Nikolaev reportedly lost sight in one eye while being detained at Chilanzar District Police Station in Tashkent for ten days in May 2024 for an administrative offence. Law enforcement officials reportedly severely ill-treated him, beating him and hitting him on the head with a mop several times while being handcuffed. Nikolaev reportedly did not receive medical care for his injuries, and the judge did not inquire about the injuries during the court hearing on the administrative offence. Only after Nikolaev's release did the man undergo a medical examination which diagnosed a severe eye injury, requiring an urgent and expensive operation, which he could not afford. An investigator took steps to identify the alleged perpetrator, but it is not clear whether any criminal case has been opened.

Before he was arrested in February 2024, **Valijon Rakhmanov** worked as an employee of the central office of the Military Counter-Intelligence Department of the State Security Service of Uzbekistan in Tashkent. Officers of the Department of Internal Security of the State Security Service reportedly detained him on 27 February and the next day he was charged with "treason" under Article 157 of the Criminal Code of Uzbekistan. On 28 February, officials promised Rakhmanov's wife a visit to her husband. When she and their young daughters arrived at the

Investigation Isolation Facility of the State Security Service in Tashkent, officers reportedly threatened to subject his family to violence. In the first month following his detention he was reportedly kept in a punishment cell, where he was not allowed to sit and subjected to sleep deprivation. When Rakhmanov was no longer able to follow the mocking commands of the supervising officers of the State Security Service, he was beaten all over his body.

On 9 January 2025, the Military Court of Uzbekistan, located in Tashkent, sentenced Rakhmanov to 16 years' imprisonment for "treason". The trial was held behind closed doors. Reportedly, Rakhmanov raised the allegations of torture during the trial, naming the perpetrators, but the court reportedly ignored his statements. He reportedly also submitted a complaint to the prosecutor's office.

On 8 April, the appeal court decided to leave the verdict unchanged. Rakhmanov's family allege that Rakhmanov had uncovered and criticized large scale embezzlement by senior officials of the State Security Services.

At the time of writing, Rakhmanov was being held at the detention facility of the State Security Service awaiting trial on the additional charge of "disclosing state secrets" (Article 162 of the Criminal Code. On 28 May, Valijon Rakhmanov declared a hunger strike, demanding a prompt and effective investigation into allegations of torture and his claim that he was targeted for uncovering a crime.

Some victims of torture have fought for justice for years, but the authorities have not brought the perpetrators to justice and victims have not received compensation. For example, although **Alexander Trofimov** was able to obtain medical evidence after he was released from detention and repeatedly lodged complaints, he has faced delaying tactics from the Prosecutor's Office as well as intimidation from the perpetrators themselves.[54]

Lack of comprehensive statistics

There remains a lack of comprehensive and unified statistics on complaints, investigations, prosecutions, convictions, and means of redress in cases involving allegations of torture and other forms of ill-treatment.

Since the EU-Uzbekistan Human Rights Dialogue in June 2024, the authors of this briefing have not learnt of any cases initiated under Article 235 of the Criminal Code, which specifically punishes the "use of torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment". Cases involving torture and other forms of ill-treatment are often prosecuted under other articles of the Criminal Code. For example, perpetrators are often charged with crimes included in the chapter "Military Official Crimes" of the Criminal Code such as "abuse of power, excess or inaction of power" (Article 301) or "negligence in service" (Article 302). Such cases are tried by military courts and the trials are held behind closed doors. The information on these cases is classified as "secret" and lawyers participating in such trials sign non-disclosure agreements, as do all other participants in the trial, including civilians.

[54]Background information on Trofimov's case can be found in our briefing ahead of the EU-Uzbekistan Human Rights Dialogue in 2023: https://www.iphronline.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/UZB-EU-HRD-June-2023.pdf

IPHR and AHRCA's monitoring shows that when victims or their relatives or lawyers lodge a complaint about torture, the Ombudsperson's office sometimes follows up with a visit to the detainee but often fails to provide adequate assistance.

Upon admittance to Pre-trial Isolation Facility No. 1, known as "Tashtyurma", detainees undergo a medical examination. However, AHRCA is aware of cases where the results were not made available to the detainee or the lawyer, making it impossible to refer to it in a formal complaint. By law, medical posts in penitentiary institutions are also required to record traces of torture on injured prisoners, but our monitoring indicates that they often fail to do so.

Lack of independent forensic examinations

Despite commitments to upholding the standards of the Istanbul Protocol and other legal standards for independent medical and forensic examination of torture victims, there is still no independent institute for medical examination in Uzbekistan. State medical institutions usually reject requests from lawyers and parents of torture victims, since investigators and law enforcement officials routinely put pressure on medical workers not to record evidence of torture after examinations in order to deprive the victim of the opportunity to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Reported extension of prison sentence for breaking prison rules

There were allegations that Tulkin Astanov, whom Forum 18 news service designated as a Muslim prisoner of conscience, was subjected to torture and ill-treatment in prison in 2023 and 2024 in connection with exercising his right to freedom of religion and belief.[55] Astanov had been sentenced to a five years' suspended prison sentence by Uchtepa District Criminal Court of Tashkent on 18 October 2019. In 2021, Tashkent City Criminal Court imprisoned him for five years, after Astanov repeatedly continued to defend Muslims' freedom of religion and belief, including demonstrating outside the President's residence. He served his sentence in the prison colony in Kagan, Bukhara region (KIN-1).

On 5 May 2025, he was charged with "disobeying the rules of the prison administration" (Article 221, part 2 of the Criminal Code) () for failing to attend morning exercises, and thus causing discontent among other prisoners. Astanov has stated that the accusation was unfounded but the court nevertheless sentenced him to another three years and two months in prison, and to transfer him to a strict regime prison colony. Astanov's lawyer argues that the latest charge was fabricated to punish him for providing legal assistance to other prisoners, and helping them to write complaints. Astanov is currently being held in pre-trial detention in Bukhara. He is believed to be in poor health as he suffers from diabetes.

Death of former diplomat

Former Uzbekistani diplomat **Kadyr Yusupov** passed away on 14 November 2024 at the age of 73, following years of persecution and imprisonment on disputed treason charges.[56] Arrested in 2018 based on statements made during a psychotic episode, Yusupov was convicted in a closed trial in 2020 and sentenced to five and a half years in prison, where he allegedly faced torture and dire conditions. Though released in June 2024, he remained under state supervision and

[55] https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2959
[56] https://iphronline.org/articles/uzbekistan-former-diplomat-kadyr-yusupov-has-passed-away/

struggled with post-traumatic stress, expressing deep despair before his death. Human rights organisations continue to call for an independent investigation into his arbitrary detention and ill-treatment.

Recommendations:

- Raise concern at reports that Dmitry Ivanus, who is serving a sentence in Prison Colony Settlement No. 51, was beaten by the head of the institution and his deputy on 18 June 2024. Promptly instigate an investigation.
- Raise concern at the case of Denis Nikolaev who sustained a serious eye injury, reportedly after being beaten and hit with a mop by police of Chilanzar District in Tashkent in May 2024. Call for an effective investigation, medical rehabilitation and fair and adequate compensation.
- Raise concern at the case of Valijon Rakhmanov, a former employee of the State Security Service of Uzbekistan, who alleges that he was tortured following his arrest in February 2024.
- Raise concern at the case of Alexander Trofimov who was tortured at Chilanzar District police station in May 2021 and has still not obtained justice, although medical reports confirm broken ribs.
- Ask the authorities of Uzbekistan to publish comprehensive and unified statistics on complaints, investigations, prosecutions, convictions, and means of redress in cases involving allegations of torture and other forms of ill-treatment.
- Facilitate the establishment of an independent forensic medical service to provide free-of-charge services in cases involving complaints of torture or ill-treatment.

Domestic violence

In recent years, the Uzbekistani authorities have taken some positive steps to address the widespread problem of domestic violence, but more progress is needed. In April 2023, a new Law on the Protection of Women came into force[57], introducing administrative and criminal liability for domestic violence, including economic and psychological violence, and extending the terms of protection orders for victims of domestic violence.

In connection with the adoption of the law, amendments to the Criminal Code and the Code of Administrative Responsibility were adopted, further strengthening the protection of women and children facing violence. Key amendments included the criminalisation of domestic violence under Article 126-1 of the Criminal Code, encompassing physical, psychological, and economic violence within family relationships. In addition, Article 141-3 of the Criminal Code now criminalises the unauthorized dissemination of intimate materials. This provision was intended to address the rise in cyber-violence, including "revenge porn" (distributing intimate photos or videos without consent) and aims to protect victims from blackmail and psychological coercion.

However, the 2023 Law on the Protection of Women failed to include several crucial recommendations made by the Interagency Working Group, which included civil society experts. For example, it still permits reconciliation between victims and perpetrators in cases

[57] https://parliament.gov.uz/ru/news/xotin-qizlar-va-bolalar-huquqlarini-himoya-qilish-tizimi-yanada-takomillashtirilmoqda

involving forced sexual relations, coerced marriage, or illegal deprivation of liberty. Additionally, it fails to provide enhanced protection for minors against indecent acts, and does not explicitly outlaw child exploitation through prostitution or grooming.

Of greater concern is that in practice, the law is not implemented consistently. For example, although the Law on Protection of Women entitles victims of psychological, physical, sexual, or economic violence to free legal assistance, the infrastructure needed to ensure access to these services is lacking. As many women are financially dependent on their abusers, most cannot afford to pay for legal support. Furthermore, NGO partners inform us that there is a severe shortage of emergency services, shelters, hotlines, and qualified social workers or psychologists to assist victims.

Human rights organisations report that individuals with disabilities face heightened risks of abuse and social exclusion and often lack awareness of their rights or the support available.

Government officials do not consistently promote a clear stance of zero tolerance toward domestic violence. State-run media outlets continue to reinforce harmful gender stereotypes, in some instances portraying women and girls as needing to be "controlled." This entrenched mindset fosters silence around abuse, a lack of accountability, and impunity for perpetrators.

A matter of serious concern is the low rate of reporting of domestic violence and the frequent withdrawal of victims' complaints. Many experts interviewed in 2025 for an upcoming IPHR briefing on domestic violence in Uzbekistan stated that victims rarely seek help at early stages, because they fear the situation will escalate or because they consider such incidents as "normal". A 2024 Tashkent University survey found that 60 percent of women living in urban areas and 75 percent of women living in rural areas do not consider isolated incidents of violence grounds for police intervention.[58]

According to an internal report by the Ministry of Internal Affairs for 2024, approximately 40 percent of registered cases of domestic violence never reach trial due to victims retracting their complaints. Experts interviewed by IPHR from victim support services, reported that the reasons for this include inter alia, fear of retaliation, familial pressure, or social stigma.

The public lacks awareness about domestic violence. Many women's rights activists highlight that state sponsored, well tailored country wide campaigns are needed to raise awareness about Uzbekistan's legislation on violence against women and how victims are supported. This would also send a strong message that the state perceives it as a crime and not an internal family affair.

Recommendations:

- Raise concern that although the 2023 Law on the Protection of Women stipulates that victims of domestic violence are entitled to free legal assistance, this right is not accessible in practice.
- Set up a nationwide network of legal support for victims of domestic violence, as well as a sufficient number of emergency services, shelters, hotlines, staffed with qualified social workers or psychologists.

[58] Sociological Survey, Tashkent State University, 2024, internal academic source.