

## The Fight against Islam in Uzbekistan favoring lighter prison sentences to Christians and extreme sentences to Muslims

### News:

Uzbekistan: A Tashkent court jailed eleven Muslims who met to pray and discuss their faith for up to six years. Several testified about torture (including officers' threat to rape the wife of one in front of him). The court ignored the testimony. Three Protestants were given 15-day terms. ([Forum 18](#), June 20, 2017)

### Comment:

As [stated in the report](#), the eleven Muslim men are all being held in the Interior Ministry's Detention Centre No. 1 in Tashkent.

The authorities claim that in a 2008 meeting, some of the men spoke against then President Islam Karimov, talked about the need to establish an Islamic Caliphate in Uzbekistan, and planned to overthrow the government. They also accused them of supporting a banned radical Islamic movement and of listening to recorded sermons of an Imam the authorities "disappeared" 22 years ago.

However, Surat Ikramov, an independent human rights defender, dismissed these accusations. "The defendants only ate, rested, and prayed together," he insisted to Forum 18 from Tashkent on 15 June. He complained that **the case is "fabricated, and the authorities produced no evidence except the confessions extracted from the defendants by torturing them during the investigation."**

Where the first judge was removed from the hearing trial due to claims of being drunk and the second replacement judge carried out swift hearings where "the Court rushed to carry out the orders from the executive authorities". The accusations against the 11 men (who have been in prison since late 2016) are serious carrying heavy fines and labour prison sentences. When being questioned by the Forum 18, they were given the vague runaround with unanswered calls, and denying identities and information.

The Court also ignored the testimony of Ravshan Sadykov, one of the defendants, about his torture during the investigation, Ikramov added. "Police choked him by putting a plastic bag over his head, and electrocuted him in his earlobes to make him confess he was guilty." Ikramov added that the Court also did "not hear the six witnesses who were supposed to give testimonies of the defendants' innocence."

Whereas for three Protestants, a court in Nukus, Karakalpakstan's regional capital, handed down **the 15-day administrative prison terms** to punish them for meeting for worship in a home but were freed prior.

In keeping with the ubiquitous ferocious clamp down on those who vocalize their standpoint for Islam and needed change in society, the mere thought propels the Uzbek government in overdrive to pursue those seen suspicious or advocates. Their severe stance against their own people compels the government to exert its brutal

silence on the Uzbek people. Any form of gathering be it for eating, praying, or leisure is means for suspicion. The price for standing for one's belief is steep and may cost one's life. Threats of rape of one's female relatives, shutdown of one's livelihood, illicit searches and raid of residence, and this pales in comparison to the brutal prison sentences with the full force tortures.

It is important to stay informed of recent happenings to stay aware of how government tries to intimidate its people molding their thoughts and actions thru state sponsored imams and their dictated khutbas and state media. The stark difference in stances towards Muslims and non-Muslims in Uzbekistan is clear and known. Non-Muslims have more leniency than the Muslims in the court proceedings and prison sentences. Mosques and public gatherings are surveyed as the government fears any uprising or change to the status quo especially those stemming from an Islamic awareness or enlightenment. Using heavy handed policies, the government thinks that it can stomp out any complaints of the bleak living conditions in Uzbekistan.

News leaks are rare and open discussion of what happens in their prisons is even rarer. Media blackout practices are widespread and for the human rights groups, they too get the long runaround, often yielding in fruitless results. The media is state controlled and social media networks are closely monitored. More than ever Muslims worldwide need to raise awareness of what is happening in the society and prisons of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan since the rulers of the former Soviet countries still sing to the old tune of brute force.

Mashallah the Muslims of Uzbekistan and the neighboring countries of the former Soviet Union grasp tightly to their belief in Islam reminding us of Mashtit Firaun – the hairdresser of the daughter of Firaun- threatening her to declare that Firaun is her lord defiantly rejecting this until he boiled all five of her children in a pit of boiling oil. Her belief in Allah making this feeble woman more powerful than Firaun who was unable to shake her belief refusing to quiver before the Pharoah. Adamant in her Aqeedah, Mashtit Firaun was guaranteed Jannah with her children. This is how the Muslims of Uzbekistan hold onto their Aqeedah of Islam, despite the torture, rape, and murder, they boldly declare Allah is their Lord. Their strength is inspiring, their Iman is humbling! And this is what the Uzbek government truly fears that it is no longer feared by its people.

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