

Human Rights Watch

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Authorities Should Free Yusuf Jumaev Without Delay

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(New York) - Uzbek authorities should promptly investigate allegations of ill-treatment against the jailed dissident Yusuf Jumaev and ensure his prompt release from prison, Human Rights Watch said today.

In mid-June 2009, officials at Jaslyk Prison put Jumaev in an isolation cell for eight days without giving him any reason, family members said. He was transferred back to his regular cell only after his health deteriorated severely, said his daughter, who met with him earlier this month. Because the isolation cell is right above the prison kitchen, it is very hot.

Jumaev's family said that prison guards had burned him several times during his detention by placing a hot electric teapot on his shoulders. He was reportedly denied use of a toilet and was not allowed out of the cell at all during the eight days. He was also denied food and water for at least two of the days.

"The abuse suffered by Yusuf Jumaev is as outrageous as it is familiar," said Holly Cartner, Europe and Central Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "There is no reason to hold him in the first place. The Uzbek authorities need to free Jumaev right away, and hold accountable those responsible for his ill-treatment."

Jumaev is a poet and political dissident who called for President Islam Karimov's resignation in the run-up to the December 2007 presidential elections. He was sentenced to five years in a penal colony by Bukhara Regional Court on April 15, 2008 on charges that included "insult" and "resisting arrest."

Jumaev is one of many dissidents and human rights activists jailed by the Uzbek authorities on political grounds. Human Rights Watch calls on the government immediately and unconditionally to free all wrongfully imprisoned human rights defenders, journalists, political opposition members, and other activists held on politically motivated charges.

Family members interviewed by Human Rights Watch said that prison guards have harassed, insulted, and beaten Jumaev regularly since he was transferred to Jaslyk prison in July 2008. Feruza Jumaeva, Jumaev's daughter, told Human Rights Watch that during their visit on July 2, 2009, Jumaev showed signs of ill-treatment. Jumaeva told Human Rights Watch that her father was very thin and pale. He was reportedly brought out to the meeting room by two prison guards, who held him up by his arms as he was unable to walk without support.

Jumaev told his daughter during the visit that the guards had threatened to torture him to death and had told him that it would be better if he just killed himself. The guards also reportedly told him that the order to kill him had come "from above."

Jumaeva told Human Rights Watch that during her visit with her father, their conversation was regularly interrupted by prison guards, and they were not permitted to speak freely. About 20 minutes into the visit, as Jumaev was describing the ill-treatment to his daughter, guards abruptly ended the visit. Jumaev is supposed to be permitted two-hour family visitations once every month. However, family members have told Human Rights Watch that prison officials often refuse to allow these scheduled visits, or cut them short.

In violation of Jumaev's original sentence, which specified that he serve his sentence in a penal colony (*kolonia poseleniye*) - effectively a minimum-security prison - Jumaev was transferred through several prisons, including Bukhara Province Prison No. 3, Tashkent City Prison, and Qunghirost Prison in Karakalpakstan before he was moved to Jaslyk Prison on July 1, 2008. Under Uzbek law, Jumaev's sentence must be altered by a court before he can be legally transferred to a strict-regime prison. It is not known whether such a trial has taken place.

Jaslyk is a "severe regime" prison so notorious for its harsh conditions that the UN special rapporteur for torture recommended that it be

closed down following his visit to Uzbekistan in 2003. It is known among Uzbek human rights activists as "the place from which no one returns."

Human Rights Watch has documented numerous cases of ill-treatment and torture in Jaslyk, including the [suspicious deaths of two men](#) serving extended prison sentences on religious extremism charges.

"Jaslyk prison is beyond reform," said Cartner, "The Uzbek authorities should heed the call of the UN's top expert on torture and shut it down."

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