

URGENT ACTION

STOP JOURNALIST'S FORCIBLE RETURN TO UZBEKISTAN
Journalist and activist Khudoberdi Nurmatov (also known as Ali Feruz) is at risk of being forcibly returned from Russia to Uzbekistan. Friends and supporters are worried that he could be abducted by Uzbekistani security forces. He is at risk of serious human rights violations, including torture, if returned to Uzbekistan.

Khudoberdi Nurmatov, an Uzbekistani asylum-seeker and journalist who lives and works in Moscow, is at risk of being forcibly returned under fast-track administrative measures to Uzbekistan. There he would be at risk of serious human rights violations, including torture. Khudoberdi Nurmatov writes for the independent newspaper Novaia Gazeta under the pseudonym Ali Feruz, covering issues that include disability rights, and the rights of refugees and migrants from Central Asia. He has also been an activist with Amnesty International since 2015.

Khudoberdi Nurmatov was detained by police on 16 March, charged with administrative offences relating to his migration status in Russia. He is an Uzbekistani national, but was born in Russia where he spent his childhood before moving to Uzbekistan. He was forced to flee Uzbekistan in 2009 after he was detained and tortured by officers of the Uzbekistani National Security Service for refusing to secretly collaborate with them. Khudoberdi Nurmatov applied for temporary asylum in Russia and he consequently has the right to be in Russia until a decision has been taken on his status and all appeal processes exhausted.

Following Khudoberdi Nurmatov's arrest, his lawyers were not given access to him for several hours, by which time he was feeling very unwell and was running a high temperature. He was taken to hospital in an ambulance, accompanied by one of his lawyers. He remains in hospital and is being treated for an acute infection. After his transfer to hospital in the evening of March 16th, he was released from custody on the condition that he would present at the police station if summoned. No date has been fixed for a court hearing on his administrative charges but his lawyers are concerned that it could be in the next few days.

Supporters of Khudoberdi Nurmatov who gathered outside the police station were concerned that Uzbekistani security officers might attempt to abduct him. They noted the presence of an unmarked black car, which was seen leaving the police compound shortly after the ambulance left to take Khudoberdi Nurmatov to hospital. Amnesty International has documented numerous instances of refugees, asylum-seekers and labour migrants being abducted from Russia by Uzbekistani security forces with the complicity of Russian security services.

Please write immediately in Russian or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to ensure that Khudoberdi Nurmatov, also known as Ali Feruz, is not forcibly returned to Uzbekistan, where he is at real risk of torture or other ill-treatment;
- Calling on them to take all necessary steps to offer him effective protection to prevent him from being abducted to Uzbekistan;
- Grant Khudoberdi Nurmatov refugee status in Russia.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 28 APRIL 2017 TO:

Migration Department of the Ministry of Interior, GUMVD Moskvyy
 Head of Department
 Col. Svetlana Aleksandrovna Pleshakova
 Fax: +7 495 698 6651
 Email: smi_gu77@mvd.gov.ru
Salutation: Dear Col. Pleshakova

Deputy Director of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation
 Vladimir Grigor'evich Kulishov
 Director of Border Agency
 Lubianskaya ploshad, dom 2,
 107031 Moscow, Russian Federation
 Fax: +7 495 625 0578
 Email: fsb@fsb.ru
Salutation: Dear Vladimir Grigor'evich

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR ALEXANDER VLADIMIROVICH YAKOVENKO, Embassy of Russia, 6-7 Kensington Palace Gardens, London, W8 4QP, 020 7229 6412

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Amnesty International's research has found that hundreds of asylum-seekers, refugees and labour migrants have been abducted or forcibly returned from Russia to Uzbekistan since 2014 in blatant violation of Russia's international human rights obligations. Short of resorting to complicity in the abduction of individuals, the Russian authorities have sought other ways to circumvent their international obligations and have used administrative means, such as deportations for administrative offences, to return individuals to Uzbekistan where they face a real risk of torture. The numbers of those forcibly returned to Uzbekistan via administrative means are in their hundreds. Many of them have tried unsuccessfully to apply for asylum with the Russian authorities. The Russian authorities have continued to accept at face value assurances from their Uzbekistani counterparts that individuals will not be tortured upon return to Uzbekistan, and have failed to conduct effective investigations into any of the cases of abductions of Uzbekistan nationals in Russia that have been raised with them. For additional information see the report *Uzbekistan: Fast-track to torture: abductions and forcible returns from Russia to Uzbekistan* (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur62/3740/2016/en/>) and *Amnesty International's Submission to the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers: Garabayev V. Russian Federation (No.38411/02) Group of Cases* (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur62/5839/2017/en/>).

If returned to Uzbekistan, Khudoberdi Nurmatov will, like many before him, be at real risk of incommunicado detention, torture or other ill-treatment, and unfair trial. If imprisoned in Uzbekistan, he would face a long prison term in cruel, inhuman and degrading conditions.

Further information on UA: 61/17 Index: EUR 46/5905/2017 Issue Date: 17 March 2017