

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers

Ref.: AL UZB 3/2025
(Please use this reference in your reply)

12 May 2025

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 52/4, 51/8, 52/9 and 53/12.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning **the continued arbitrary detention of Mr. Dawletmurat Tajimuratov, along with allegations of ongoing and new violations of his human rights.**

Mr. Dawletmurat Tajimuratov (Dawletmurat Tazhimuratov) is a Karakalpak human rights defender and lawyer. He is a prominent community leader in the autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan in the northwest of Uzbekistan. Additionally, Mr. Tajimuratov has worked as an editor for the newspaper *El Khyzmetinde (In the Service of the People)*. As part of his human rights work, he has advocated for the rights of the Karakalpak ethnic minority in Uzbekistan, particularly in summer 2022 in the context of proposed constitutional amendments that would have removed the Republic of Karakalpakstan's autonomous status and its right to secede from Uzbekistan based on a referendum.

We previously wrote to your Excellency's Government regarding the case of Mr. Tajimuratov on 2 August 2023 ([AL UZB 2/2023](#)) and 16 August 2024 ([AL UZB 3/2024](#)). We thank your Excellency's Government for its replies dated 24 January 2024 and 12 November 2024. Additionally, at its 101st session, 11-15 November 2024, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention adopted opinion 62/2024 ([A/HRC/WGAD/2024/62](#)), in which it determined that Mr. Tajimuratov's detention is arbitrary. The Government did not reply to the Working Group regarding this. Serious concerns regarding Mr. Tajimuratov's situation remain.

According to the information received:

Mr. Dawletmurat Tajimuratov was initially arrested on 1 July 2022, released several hours later, and re-arrested on 4 July 2022. He has remained in detention since. On 31 January 2023, Mr. Tajimuratov was sentenced by the Bukhara Regional Criminal Court to 16 years in prison. We note information in your Excellency's Government's reply of 24 January 2024 that he was found guilty of committing crimes under articles 159 (4) (breaches of the constitutional order), 167 (3) (a) (theft by misappropriation or embezzlement), 243 (money

laundering), 244 (3) (sowing civil unrest), and 244-1 (3) (a), (b), and (d) (production, storage, circulation, or demonstration of material containing a threat to public security and public order) of the Uzbekistani Criminal Code. On 5 June 2023 and 23 July 2024, the Supreme Court of Uzbekistan upheld his verdict on appeal.

According to the information provided to us, during the pre-trial stage and until losing his first appeal, Mr. Tajimuratov was kept in the following facilities: detention centre No. 11 in Urgench, detention centre No. 4 in Bukhara, and detention centre No. 1 in Zangiota district of Tashkent region, and around 20 June 2023, he was transferred to the penal colony No. 11 in Navoi, where he is currently serving his sentence.

Alleged violations in July 2022 - November 2024

The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in its opinion 62/2024 concluded that Mr. Tajimuratov's detention is arbitrary as it has no legal basis, the charges against him were linked to his exercise of the freedom of speech and the right to participate in the conduct of public affairs, his right to a fair trial and due process was violated, and his detention was discriminatory on the grounds of his political opinions and his Karakalpak ethnicity.

The Working Group opinion 62/2024 stated that after Mr. Tajimuratov's arrest on 1 July 2022, a bag was placed over his head at the police station before he was taken to the Ministry of External Affairs, where he was allegedly beaten and shot with a stun gun. During the second arrest on 4 July 2022, officials from the Ministry of Internal Affairs reportedly tied his hands behind his back, again placed a bag over his head, and beat him. He was forced onto a helicopter to Urgench, where he was made to lie on the floor while officials walked over him, at one point stomping on his head. As previously noted in communication AL UZB 2/2023, his whereabouts remained unknown for several days following this second arrest.

The Working Group opinion 62/2024 also stated that, while in pre-trial detention, Mr. Tajimuratov's head was reportedly shaved, and he was harassed and intimidated by other detainees on the instructions of officials. As was stated in communication AL UZB 2/2023, he also reportedly suffered physical and psychological harassment by officers at the Urgench detention centre and was subjected to beatings and inhumane detention conditions.

The Working Group opinion 62/2024 also stated that, while serving his sentence at the penal colony No. 11 in Navoi, Mr. Tajimuratov received poor-quality food and medical care. Prison officials allegedly required him to express gratitude for anything he received, including food and basic necessities, denied information – such as the time of day, newspapers, radio, television, or educational materials – or contact with others, and punished him for refusing to sing the national anthem of Uzbekistan. As noted in communication AL UZB 3/2024, he also lacked clean drinking water and protective equipment while working in a lime factory, which reportedly affected his health.

We note your Excellency's Government's responses of 24 January 2024 and 12 November 2024 to the communications, in which you stated that no human rights violations occurred, citing *inter alia* internal investigations by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the State Security Service and that Mr. Tajimuratov confirmed to the Commission of Inquiry that his rights had been respected. Your Excellency's Government further stated that relatives of those detained in connection with the Nukus protests were informed of their whereabouts. It clarified that detention conditions are as close as possible to international standards, drinking water filters are installed in penal institutions, inmates working with harmful substances receive free rinsing and neutralising agents in addition to laundry soap, and as of November 2024 Mr. Tajimuratov's health was stable.

However, new information suggests that Mr. Tajimuratov's family only learned of his whereabouts in mid-July 2022, when he was able to make a phone call. The investigations of alleged violations of his rights allegedly lacked transparency. At some point, Mr. Tajimuratov allegedly sought access to evidence that could corroborate his claims – such as CCTV footage – but was reportedly denied. Contrary to the information in your Excellency's Government's responses, he allegedly notified the Commission of Inquiry about at least some alleged ill-treatment, particularly during the early stages of his detention. Furthermore, we note that any statements he may have made to the investigators or to the Commission of Inquiry were given while in detention and may have been influenced by fear of retaliation. He reportedly continues to be denied access to clean drinking water and remains exposed to hazardous conditions in the lime factory without adequate protective equipment. **Additionally, a number of further concerns have been raised, as outlined below.**

Alleged violations since November 2024

According to the information received, on 4 December 2024 at approximately 3.50 p.m. and on 16 December 2024 at approximately 8 a.m., officers at the penal colony No. 11 in Navoi subjected Mr. Tajimuratov to beatings. It is further alleged that an unknown substance was added to his food, causing dizziness and numbness. The exact date of this incident remains unknown. These acts reportedly followed his organisation of a peaceful protest by inmates calling for improved detention conditions.

On 28 March 2025, further reports emerged indicating that Mr. Tajimuratov was being subjected to “mental and physical torture.” According to these reports, certain inmates regularly beat him at the instruction of penal colony officials, reportedly in a manner that leaves no visible injuries. His personal writings – including, according to some sources, a diary documenting abuses – as well as other belongings, have reportedly been stolen. It is further alleged that penal colony officials encourage such thefts and intimidation by fellow inmates and fail to sanction those responsible.

Between 4 – 7 March 2025, during the first four days of a 10-day solitary confinement, guards reportedly seized Mr. Tajimuratov's uneaten food before

he could break his fast for Ramadan, resulting in him not eating for four consecutive days.

Regarding his detention conditions, it has been reported that, in addition to labour in a lime factory, Mr. Tajimuratov is also compelled to work in a coal plant without adequate protective equipment. His health reportedly deteriorated further in 2025. He is allegedly provided with a filthy mattress and bedding. As of the time of writing, he has reportedly been held in solitary confinement on at least three occasions – twice for refusing to sing the national anthem of Uzbekistan and once following an altercation with a prisoner alleged to have assaulted him.

Officials at the penal colony allegedly restrict and curtail visits from his family. For instance, a long visit that was planned for January 2025 was allegedly postponed until March 2025 and shortened from the expected three days to two without explanation. Telephone calls with his family have reportedly been delayed and shortened. Mr. Tajimuratov has also allegedly faced periodic denial of access to correspondence, with some letters to him withheld and others not forwarded to his family. Packages sent by his family are reportedly returned in whole or in part without clear justification.

Since November 2024, he has reportedly faced recurring threats of transfer to a stricter prison regime.

Mr. Tajimuratov is alleged to have made repeated attempts to submit complaints to the relevant authorities regarding various violations of his rights; however, these complaints are reportedly not transmitted by the penal colony. On 23 December 2024, he allegedly managed to submit a complaint with the assistance of his local counsel. It was addressed to several relevant government bodies, including the Office of the President, the Prosecutor General, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Navoi Regional Prosecutor, and the Human Rights Ombudsman. However, no action was reportedly taken to investigate, prosecute, or hold those responsible to account.

While we do not wish to prejudge the accuracy of these allegations, we would like to express our concern regarding the ongoing arbitrary detention of Mr. Tajimuratov, repeatedly denounced to be connected to his work as a human rights defender and his exercise of freedom expression.

We are deeply concerned by allegations that investigations into past violations of his rights – reportedly committed between July 2022 and November 2024 – lacked transparency. We also note with concern reports that certain violations raised before are ongoing, including the denial of access to clean drinking water in detention and the absence of adequate protective equipment in the lime factory. In this regard, we are similarly concerned by allegations that sufficient protective equipment is not being provided for his work in a coal plant.

In addition, we are concerned by new allegations regarding beatings, introduction of an unknown substance into Mr. Tajimuratov's food, theft of his personal belongings, intimidation, seizure of food prior to the breaking of his fast during

Ramadan, provision of unsanitary bedding and mattress, and repeated placement in solitary confinement.

We are further concerned by reports of restricted and curtailed visits and telephone contact with family, as well as periodic denial of access to correspondence and unwarranted restrictions on the receipt of packages.

We are deeply concerned that, in the context of numerous alleged violations, some of his complaints have reportedly not been transmitted by the penal colony to the relevant authorities, while at least one other has allegedly not been acted upon.

We are also concerned by reports indicating a further deterioration of his health in 2025.

We call upon the Government to comply with the decision of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention to release Mr. Tajimuratov and to accord him an enforceable right to compensation and other reparations. In the meantime, we urge the Government to immediately guarantee his safety and security, ensure conditions of detention consistent with international standards, conduct a thorough and independent investigation into all alleged violations of his rights, and to hold those responsible accountable.

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide information on the measures taken to investigate the new allegations concerning Mr. Tajimuratov's treatment – including beatings, the introduction of an unknown substance into his food, theft of personal belongings, intimidation, and the seizure of food prior to the breaking of his fast. Kindly indicate the outcomes of any such investigations, if conducted. Please also clarify whether Mr. Tajimuratov was provided with access to evidence regarding these or previous alleged violations upon his request, and, if not, the reasons for such denial.
3. Please provide detailed information on the clothing and protective equipment provided to Mr. Tajimuratov in the context of his work in the lime factory and the coal plant. Additionally, we would appreciate clarification as to whether the equipment meets relevant safety standards and is properly certified.

4. Please provide information on the measures in place to guarantee Mr. Tajimuratov's safety and security and ensure that his conditions of detention are in line with international standards, including, *inter alia*, access to clean drinking water, a clean mattress and bedding, regular and unrestricted contact with his family through visits and phone calls, access to correspondence and packages, the protection of his right to practise his religion, and the transmission of his complaints to the competent authorities outside the penal colony.

This communication and any response received from your Excellency's Government will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) within 60 days. They will also subsequently be made available in the usual report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person(s) responsible for the alleged violations.

We may publicly express our concerns in the near future as, in our view, the information upon which the press release will be based is sufficiently reliable to indicate a matter warranting immediate attention. We also believe that the wider public should be alerted to the potential implications of the above-mentioned allegations. The press release will indicate that we have been in contact with your Excellency's Government's to clarify the issue/s in question.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Mary Lawlor
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Matthew Gillett
Vice-Chair on communications of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

Irene Khan
Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

Margaret Satterthwaite
Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers

Annex

Reference to international human rights law

In connection with above alleged facts and concerns, we would like to draw the attention of your Excellency's Government to the following human rights standards.

Concerning Mr. Tajimuratov's detention, we would like to once again refer your Excellency's Government to article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ("ICCPR"), acceded to by Uzbekistan on 28 September 1995, which states that everyone has the right to liberty of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention or deprived of their liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law. Anyone who has been the victim of unlawful arrest or detention shall have an enforceable right to compensation.

We would also like to remind your Excellency's Government of the absolute and non-derogable prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment and the obligation to prevent them, enshrined in article 7 of the ICCPR and articles 2 and 16 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment ("CAT"), acceded to by Uzbekistan on 28 September 1995. Articles 12 and 16 of the CAT require each State party to ensure that its competent authorities undertake a prompt and impartial investigation wherever there are reasonable grounds to believe that such act has been committed. Articles 13 and 16 of the CAT further require each State party to ensure that any individual who alleges he has been subjected to such acts in any territory under its jurisdiction has the right to complain to, and to have his case promptly and impartially examined by, its competent authorities. According to article 14 of the CAT, each State party shall ensure in its legal system that the victim of an act of torture obtains redress and has an enforceable right to fair and adequate compensation, including the means for as full rehabilitation as possible. According to the Committee Against Torture's interpretation in general comment No. 3 (CAT/C/GC/3), this right applies to all victims of torture and acts of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment (paragraph 1).

We would also like to recall your Excellency's Government's obligations under article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights ("ICESCR"), acceded to by Uzbekistan on 28 September 1995, establishing the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. As emphasised by the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights in general comment No. 14 (E/C.12/2000/4), the right to health is an inclusive right extending not only to timely and appropriate health care but also to the underlying determinants of health, including access to safe and potable water and adequate sanitation and healthy occupational and environmental conditions (paragraph 11). According to article 12 (2) (b) and (c), the steps to be taken by the States parties to achieve the full realisation of this right shall include those necessary for the improvement of all aspects of environmental and industrial hygiene; and the prevention, treatment, and control of epidemic, endemic, occupational, and other diseases. As further explained in the general comment, States parties are required to adopt measures against environmental and occupational health hazards (paragraph 36). They are required to formulate, implement, and periodically review a coherent national policy to minimise the risk of occupational accidents and diseases, as well as to provide a

coherent national policy on occupational safety and health services (Id.). Elements of such a policy are the identification, determination, authorisation, and control of dangerous materials, equipment, substances, agents, and work processes; the provision of health information to workers and the provision, if needed, of adequate protective clothing and equipment; the enforcement of laws and regulations through adequate inspection; the requirement of notification of occupational accidents and diseases, the conduct of inquiries into serious accidents and diseases, and the production of annual statistics; the protection of workers and their representatives from disciplinary measures for actions properly taken by them in conformity with such a policy; and the provision of occupational health services with essentially preventive functions (Id.). Any victim of a violation of the right to health should have access to effective judicial or other appropriate remedies and should be entitled to adequate reparation, which may take the form of restitution, compensation, satisfaction, or guarantees of non-repetition (paragraph 59).

In regard of working conditions, we would also like to remind your Excellency's Government of article 7 of the ICESCR concerning the right of everyone to the enjoyment of just and favourable conditions of work which ensure, in particular, safe and healthy working conditions. As reiterated in general comment No. 23 (E/C.12/GC/23), the right to just and favourable conditions of work is a right of everyone, without distinction of any kind, and applies to all workers in all settings (paragraph 5). States parties have a core obligation to ensure the satisfaction of, at the very least, minimum essential levels of the right to just and favourable conditions of work; this requires States parties to adopt and implement a comprehensive national policy on occupational safety and health (paragraph 65 (d)). States parties must put into place an adequate monitoring and accountability framework by ensuring access to justice or to other effective remedies (paragraph 80).

Concerning Mr. Tajimuratov's fasting, we would like to further remind your Excellency's Government about article 18 of the ICCPR, which guarantees everyone the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. This right includes freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice, and teaching.

Additionally, we would like to remind your Excellency's Government of article 10 of the ICCPR, which requires that all persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person.

In this regard, we would also like to refer your Excellency's Government to the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners ("Mandela Rules"), adopted by the UN General Assembly on 17 December 2015 (A/RES/70/175), which establish States' responsibility to treat all prisoners with the respect due to their inherent dignity and value as human beings (rule 1), respect their religious beliefs (rule 2), follow rules concerning work (rules 96-103), communication with their family and friends (rule 58), provision of sufficient clean bedding (rule 21), and drinking water (rule 22 (2)). We note that solitary confinement shall be used only in exceptional cases as a last resort, for as short a time as possible and subject to independent review, and only pursuant to the authorisation by a competent authority (rule 45). We would like to emphasise the rules concerning protection from torture and other cruel, inhuman, or

degrading treatment or punishment and ensuring prisoners' safety and security at all times (rule 1), as well as requests and complaints to various officials and authorities and relevant investigations (rules 56-57, 71).

Article 19 of the ICCPR guarantees the right to freedom of opinion and the right to freedom of expression, which includes the right "to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media". This right applies online as well as offline, protects the freedom of the press as one of its core elements and includes not only the exchange of information that is favourable, but also that which may criticize, shock, or offend.

In its general comment No. 34, the Human Rights Committee stated that States parties to the ICCPR are required to guarantee the right to freedom of expression, including "political discourse, commentary on one's own and on public affairs, canvassing, discussion of human rights, journalism, cultural and artistic expression, teaching, and religious discourse" (CCPR/C/GC/34, para. 11). The Committee states that article 19 also covers the right of a free press and other media able to comment on public issues without censorship or restraint and to inform public opinion and a corresponding right of the public to receive media output.

The Committee further asserts that there is a duty of States to put in place effective measures to protect against attacks aimed at silencing those exercising their right to freedom of expression (para. 23). Recognizing how journalists and persons who engage in the gathering and analysis of information on the human rights situation and who publish human rights-related reports, including judges and lawyers, are frequently subjected to threats, intimidation and attacks because of their activities, the Committee stresses that "all such attacks should be vigorously investigated in a timely fashion, and the perpetrators prosecuted, and the victims, or, in the case of killings, their representatives, be in receipt of appropriate forms of redress" (para. 23).

Any restriction on the right to freedom of expression must be compatible with the requirements set out in article 19(3) ICCPR. Under these requirements, restrictions must (i) be provided by law; (ii) pursue one of the legitimate aims for restriction, which are the respect of the rights or reputations of others and the protection of national security or of public order (*ordre public*), or of public health or morals; and (iii) be necessary and proportionate for those objectives. The State has the burden of proof to demonstrate that any such restrictions are compatible with the Covenant, proving "in specific and individualized fashion the precise nature of the threat, and the necessity and proportionality of the specific action taken, in particular by establishing a direct and immediate connection between the expression and the threat" (CCPR/C/GC/34, para. 35). The Human Rights Committee recalled that the relation between right and restriction and between norm and exception must not be reversed. In this regard, the Human Rights Committee stated that the restrictions must be "the least intrusive instrument among those which might achieve their protective function". (CCPR/C/GC/34, para. 34).

Furthermore, we would like to refer your Excellency's Government to the fundamental principles set forth in the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted on 9 December 1998

(“UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders”). Articles 1 and 2 of the Declaration state that everyone has the right to promote and strive for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels and that each State has a prime responsibility and duty to protect, promote, and implement all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Likewise, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency’s Government the following provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders:

- Article 9 (1), which provides for the right to benefit from an effective remedy and to be protected in the event of the human rights violations; and
- Article 12 (2) and (3), which provides that the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection of everyone against any violence, threats, retaliation, *de facto* or *de jure* adverse discrimination, pressure, or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of their legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the Declaration. In this connection, everyone is entitled, individually and in association with others, to be protected effectively under national law in reacting against or opposing, through peaceful means, activities, and acts, including those by omission, attributable to States that result in violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and acts of violence perpetrated by groups or individuals that affect the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Finally, in view Mr. Tajimuratov’s long-term sentence, we would like to refer your Excellency’s Government to recommendations in the report on the long-term detention of human rights defenders (A/76/143), in which the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders emphasised that States should immediately and unconditionally release all detained human rights defenders and cease jailing them for their legitimate work (paragraph 158 (a), (b)). States should also stop subjecting them to torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, and ensure their legal rights (paragraph 158 (d)-(e)). Furthermore, adequate care should be provided to detained defenders, including access to family and phone calls (paragraph 158 (j)).