

PROFILE SERIES

UZBEKISTAN

**POLITICAL CONDITIONS
IN THE POST-SOVIET ERA**

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SUMMARY

Unlike most of the former Soviet republics, in which governments have become more democratic and less able to control societal opposition, Uzbekistan's political structure and its level of governmental repression and control remain virtually unchanged from the Soviet era. Uzbekistan's president, Islam Karimov, was elected in the Soviet period. The ruling National Democratic Party automatically incorporated all members of the Uzbek Communist Party in its membership when it was created as a successor to the Communist Party. The Karimov government is extremely intolerant toward the opposition parties which were formed in the *glasnost* period preceding the collapse of the Soviet Union. The press is now rigidly censored. Human, civil and ethnic rights are abridged and restored solely at the whim of the government. Almost all of the opposition parties and movements formed before Uzbek independence have been banned, while human rights organizations have been harassed, their leaders jailed and convicted, often on unlikely criminal charges such as drug trafficking or assaulting a security officer.

Individuals are more free now to practice religion than during the Soviet era -- as long as the government perceives their religious beliefs and practices to be apolitical. Muslims, Jews, and Christians have usually been permitted to practice their religions, restore or build mosques, churches and synagogues, and publish religious material. Apart from the Uzbek government's implementation of language laws and its decision not to allow dual citizenship -- which may affect the economic status of Russian-speakers but which are not in themselves violations of human or civil rights -- the government does not have an officially-stated policy of repressing any ethnic minorities. However, the most widespread human rights abuses perpetrated by the current government -- before and after independence -- have been the mass expulsion of Meskhetian Turks from Uzbekistan, and brutal repression of ethnic Tajiks. There have also been reports of attacks by societal groups against Russian speakers -- and particularly against Russian-speaking Jews -- which the government has taken few measures to investigate or prosecute.

Moreover, the Uzbek government actively represses those religious movements which are involved in, or perceived as involved in, political issues. The Islamic Renaissance Party, for example, is banned in Uzbekistan. Other Muslim movements, such as a movement which advocates supplanting certain parts of the Uzbek civil code with Islamic law, are also suppressed. In addition, some religious and ethnic groups, particularly Jews, are commonly identified throughout the former Soviet Union as being strong supporters of democracy or of reforms. Those individuals, groups and organizations which are, or are perceived to be, pro-democracy or pro-reform, can experience considerable repression in Uzbekistan. In summary, although the high level of repression in Uzbekistan affects most residents, those at greatest risk are those who either are involved in political opposition to the government (through secular ideological parties, human rights groups, or ethnic- or religious-based movements), or who are perceived by the government as being engaged in political opposition.

HISTORY

The Uzbeks arrived in the Ferghana Valley as a consequence of the massive nomadic Turkic movement into the region which began almost a thousand years ago. Their ethnic name, Uzbek, was appended to them several centuries later. It was not until the emergence of the Chagatay, or Old Uzbek, literary language in the 14th and 15th centuries that some kind of ethnic unity between the various Uzbek tribes was forged, and this sense of common identity did not extend to the governmental level. Until the Russian conquest in the nineteenth century, Uzbeks were primarily involved in internal dynastic conflicts, rather than in conflicts against other ethnic or national entities. It was only after the Russian conquest of Central Asia in the mid to late 19th century that many of the Uzbek population were united administratively, and only in the 1920s that an Uzbek national-territorial identity began to form.¹

After the military conquest of Central Asia in the late tsarist period, Russian settlers began to arrive in the Ferghana Valley. The pace of Slavic immigration increased after the failed revolution of 1905. Although no attempt was made to "russify" the Turkic populations in Central Asia during the tsarist period, attempts by the Russian government to conscript Turkic peoples to fight in World War I in 1916 led to a major uprising which tsarist authorities were not able to suppress. During the years immediately preceding the Russian Revolution, the Russian population

¹Barthold, Wilhelm, *Zwoelf Vorlesungen ueber die Geschichte der Tuerken Mittelasiens* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag Buchhandlung, 1962), pp. 177-178, 234-236, 237-238. Kononov, A.N., *Grammatika sovremennogo uzbekskogo literaturnogo yazyka* (Moscow: Akademiya Nauk SSSR, 1960), p.1. Salih, Prince Muhammed, *Die Scheibaniade: Ein oezbegisches Heldengedicht in 76 Gesaengen* (Wien: K.K.Hof- und Staatsdruckerie, 1885), translated with notes, text and commentary by Hermann Vambery, pp. xii-xiv. Tolstov, S.P., Nabiyev, R.N., Gulyamov, Ya.G., Shishkin, V.A. (eds.), *Istoriya Uzbekskoy SSR* (Tashkent: Akademiya Nauk Uzbekskoy SSR, 1955), Vol. .I, Part 1, pp. 382-388. Shcherbak, A.M., *Grammatika starouzbekskogo yazyka* (Moscow: Akademiya Nauk SSSR, 1962), p. 16. Baskakov, N.A., *Vvedeniye v izucheniye tyurkskikh yazykov*, second edition (Moscow: Vysshaya Shkola, 1969), pp.174-175. Carlisle, Don, "Uzbekistan and the Uzbeks," *Handbook of Soviet Nationalities* (New York: Macmillan, 1975), p. 286.

of Central Asia was sharply divided politically between tsarist and anti-tsarist elements.² In November 1917, the region came under the control of the Tashkent Soviet, which ruled the region without much interference from the central government until the 1920s, when Moscow decided to divide the Central Asian region -- what it referred to as Turkestan -- into three separate and rather arbitrary units, roughly corresponding to modern Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan.³ Soviet policies heightened ethnic identification and encouraged ethnic separatism, creating tensions between Uzbeks and other Central Asian ethnic groups which have increased in the post-Soviet era. As one scholar noted, Soviet boundaries "are confused and the territories twirled and twisted around themselves like the spokes of a catherine wheel. It is not even true that the boundaries divide the language-stocks ... Indeed, as history shows, Uzbeks and Tajiks are inextricably mingled in all these parts of Turkestan."⁴ The Uzbek population itself is also scattered widely among the other republics of Central Asia, with more than one million Uzbeks in Tajikistan, more than half a million in Kyrgyzstan, and over three hundred thousand in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan respectively (see section on **Ethnic Composition of the Population**).⁵ Soviet policies therefore fostered the current situation in Central Asia, in which ethnic Uzbeks have been

²Gleason, Gregory, "Uzbekistan: from Statehood to Nationhood," *Nations & Politics in Soviet Successor States* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 335.

³Gleason, Gregory, "Uzbekistan: from Statehood to Nationhood," *Nations & Politics in Soviet Successor States* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 335-336.

⁴Caroe, Sir Olaf, *Soviet Empire: The Turks of Central Asia and Stalinism* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1967), p. 146.

⁵Ilkhamov, Alisher Abrarovich, "Uzbekistan: Ethnosocial Problems in the Transitional Period" *Sotsiologicheskiye Issledovaniya* (Moscow: 8 August 1992, pp. 12-17) as reported in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service [FBIS], *Daily Report: Central Eurasia* , 6 November 1992, pp. 79-83.

involved in violent ethnic clashes in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, while relations between Turkic minorities and ethnic Uzbeks in Uzbekistan have been tense.⁶

Soviet policies also fostered the conditions which have allowed the Uzbek government to crush most societal opposition. During Stalin's regime, Uzbekistan became a center for the production of cotton, with a resulting influx of Russian settlers. The Stalin purges of 1938-1939 swept away the ethnic Uzbek communist elite as well as the majority of the Muslim clergy (the major source of opposition to communist rule during the early Stalin years), the Uzbek academic community and the creative intelligentsia.⁷

THE GORBACHEV ERA AND INDEPENDENCE

Relations between the central government and Uzbekistan became tense during *perestroika*. Moscow saw Uzbekistan "as the most economically inefficient, difficult to manage and politically corrupt of the Soviet republics. Uzbekistan officials saw the Moscow elite as

⁶Barthold, Wilhelm, *Zwoelf Vorlesungen ueber die Geschichte der Tuerken Mittelasiens* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag Buchhandlung, 1962), pp. 177-178, 234-238. Kononov, A.N., *Grammatika Sovremennogo Uzbekskogo Literaturnogo Yazyka* (Moscow: Akademiya Nauk SSSR, 1960), p.1. Salih, Prince Muhammed, *Die Scheibaniade: Ein Oezbegisches Heldengedicht in 76 Gesaengen* (Wien: K.K.Hof- und Staatsdruckerie, 1885), translated with notes, text and commentary by Hermann Vambery), pp. xii-xiv. Tolstov, S.P., Nabiyeu, R.N., Gulyamov, Ya.G., Shishkin, V.A. (eds.), *Istoriya Uzbekskoy SSR*, v. I, part 1, (Tashkent: Akademiya Nauk Uzbekskoy SSR, 1955), pp. 382-388, 463-465. Shcherbak, A.M., *Grammatika starouzbekskogo yazyka* (Moscow: Akademiya Nauk SSSR, 1962), p. 16. Baskakov, N.A., *Vvedeniye v izucheniye tyurkskikh yazykov*, second edition (Moscow: Vysshaya Shkola, 1969), pp.174-175.

⁷Carlisle, Don, "Uzbekistan and the Uzbeks," *Handbook of Major Soviet Nationalities* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), p. 287, 304.

having reneged on promises to aid the republic through changes in water policy, assistance to the unemployed, measures to alleviate ecological disasters, and increases in prices for agricultural goods and primary commodities."⁸ At the USSR Congress of Peoples Deputies in the spring of 1989, Uzbek officials criticized Moscow openly, condemning the regionalization of the Central Asian economy, namely the cotton monoculture which, according to Rafik Nishanov, had not only brought Uzbekistan to an economic standstill, but had also produced "mass ecological decay and mass illness."⁹

Moreover, although the Uzbek government under Karimov took advantage of *perestroika* to issue vehement criticisms of Soviet policies, Karimov also resented *perestroika's* tolerance of criticism of the governments of the Soviet republics from within the local Communist Party and from societal opposition forces, and attempted to suppress such criticism.¹⁰ While Karimov had himself been the First Secretary of the Central Committee of Uzbekistan's Communist Party before being elected President of Uzbekistan, he confiscated all property belonging to the Communist Party, banned the party from government and the electoral process, and created a successor party, the People's Democratic Party, which was more directly under his control.¹¹

⁸Gleason, Gregory, "Uzbekistan: from Statehood to Nationhood," *Nations & Politics in the Soviet Successor States* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 340-341.

⁹Gleason, Gregory, "Uzbekistan: from Statehood to Nationhood," *Nations & Politics in the Soviet Successor States* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 341.

¹⁰Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, "Uzbekistan," *Implementation of the Helsinki Accords: Human Rights and Democratization in the Newly Independent States of the Former Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 1993), p. 205.

¹¹The Communist Party of Uzbekistan was renamed the People's Democratic Party following the August 1991 coup against Gorbachev and Uzbekistan was declared to be independent on August 31, 1991, although the referendum on independence was not conducted until December of the same year. Karimov had been elected President by the unicameral Supreme Council of 360 deputies in March, 1990, more than a year before the manifestations of the final disintegration of the Soviet Union and was popularly elected President by 86 percent of the vote on December 27, 1990.

ETHNICITY

According to the All-Union Census of 1989, Uzbekistan's population was 19,808,077, of which Uzbeks totaled 14,123,626 (71.4 percent), Russians 1,652,179 (8.3 percent), Tajiks 931,547 (4.7 percent), Kazakhs 808,090 (4.1 percent), Tatars 467,676 (2.4 percent), Karakalpaks 411,187 (2.1 percent), and Kyrgyz 174,899 (0.9 percent); Jews (Ashkenazi and Sephardic), Georgians, Armenians and Meskhetian Turks each totalled less than one percent of Uzbekistan's population.¹² Although Uzbekistan has the largest Jewish community of the Central Asian¹³ republics, the total population is only around 55,000. Of the European (Ashkenazi) Jews, who comprise about 85% of Uzbekistan's Jewish population, about 500 are emigrating each month. The Sephardic (Bukharan) Jews, who have roots in the Central Asian region going back centuries and speak native Uzbek, are for the most part remaining in Uzbekistan.¹⁴ Over 60 percent of the Slavic population resided in Tashkent City or Tashkent Oblast.¹⁵ Some of the Russian speakers reflected in this census figure began leaving Uzbekistan for Russia in 1990, during a surge of

Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Implementation of the Helsinki Accords: Human Rights and Democratization in the Newly Independent States of the Former Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 1993), p. 205.

¹²Gosudarstvennyy Komitet SSSR po Statistike, *Natsional'nyy sostav naseleniya, chast' II* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennyy Komitet po Statistike, 1989), pp. 64-65.

¹³Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan comprise the Central Asian Republics. The other predominantly Muslim republic, Azerbaijan, is considered part of the Transcaucasus (which also includes Georgia and Armenia).

¹⁴Andre Grabot, "Peres Travels to Uzbekistan Amid Jewish Exodus," *Agence France Presse* (Paris: 2 July 1994) -- as reported in NEXIS database.

¹⁵Ilkhamov, Alisher Abrarovich, "Uzbekistan: Ethnosocial Problems of the Transitional Period," *Sotsiologicheskiye Issledovaniya* (Moscow: 8 August 1992, pp. 12-17) as reported in Foreign Broadcast Information Service [FBIS], *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*, 6 November 1992, pp. 79-83.

nationalist sentiment in Uzbekistan, and the emigration of Russian speakers continues. While job losses among Russian speakers have been a factor in this emigration, as has a certain level of violence by Uzbeks against Russian speakers, the Uzbek government has not taken any policy positions or made any public pronouncements which would indicate it is either encouraging or fostering conditions which would force all Russian speakers to leave the region.¹⁶

Russians and Russian Speakers (including European/Ashkenazi Jews)

While there were close to 1.7 million Russians in Uzbekistan when the All-Union Census was conducted in 1989, substantial emigration of Russian speakers began in 1989, and continues today. According to human rights monitors, the motives of Russian speakers are mixed, with economic conditions and fear of ethnic hostility as central factors. Since the Uzbek government introduced language laws which made Uzbek the state language of Uzbekistan, "non-Uzbek speakers feel themselves increasingly threatened ... When government organs and academic institutions are compelled to reduce their work forces, it is frequently the Russians who have lost their jobs."¹⁷ Uzbekistan's citizenship law, which does not recognize dual citizenship, has also been a factor in the emigration of Russian speakers. At independence, Uzbekistan offered citizenship to all permanent residents of Uzbekistan. Although most Russian speakers have lived in Uzbekistan for generations, many still consider themselves to have permanent ties to Russia,

¹⁶Ilkhamov, Alisher Abrarovich, "Uzbekistan: Ethnosocial Problems of the Transitional Period," *Sotsiologicheskiye Issledovaniya* (Moscow: 8 August 1992, pp. 12-17) as reported in Foreign Broadcast Information Service [FBIS], *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*, 6 November 1992, pp. 79-83.

¹⁷Department of State, "Uzbekistan," *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1992* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 1993), p. 975.

and are reluctant to elect Uzbekistan as their sole citizenship. Many refused Uzbekistan's offer of citizenship, and are, or will eventually become, stateless (at present, although they have a right to Russian citizenship, they must apply for it). Uzbekistan has chosen to treat requests for Russian citizenship for ethnic Russians (and other Russian speakers) in Uzbekistan as no different from requests for permission to leave Uzbekistan permanently to emigrate to Russia or elsewhere. When asked whether Uzbekistan has received specific requests for dual citizenship, the Uzbek Ambassador to Russia said at a recent press interview: "There has not been a single statement from those desiring to leave the republic at the appropriate levels of authorities."¹⁸ (Whether individuals have access to these 'appropriate levels of authority' is not clear.) While the language law and the ban on dual citizenship have caused Russian speakers considerable economic hardship and uncertainty, the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe maintains that such laws "are not in and of themselves violations of anyone's human rights."¹⁹

However, while the Uzbek government has not expressed any overt hostility towards its Russian-speaking minorities solely on the basis of their ethnicity, it has been either unwilling or unable to protect Russian-speaking minorities -- particularly Russian-speaking Jews (Ashkenazi, as opposed to Sephardic) -- against attacks from societal forces. These attacks began in 1989 with the rise of Uzbek nationalism, and continue to occur sporadically. As one authority on Uzbekistan noted in the Russian press, polls have shown "manifestations of anti-Semitism" in

¹⁸Abdullayev, Yusuf, "It Is Not In The Traditions Of The Uzbek People To Find Fault With The Past" (Moscow: *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* , 26 December 1992, p. 3) as reported in Foreign Broadcast Information Service [FBIS], *Daily Report: Central Eurasia* , 7 January 1993, pp. 66-67.

¹⁹"Draft Copy Of Paper On Tajikistan," letter from Patricia Carley, Helsinki Commission (Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe), to John Evans, Resource Information Center, 28 June 1993.

Uzbekistan which "is expressed basically on a private [societal] level."²⁰ Other human rights monitors, including the Canadian government and the Union of Councils, have also noted incidents of attacks against Jews, particularly in rural areas.²¹ With the mass emigration of Russian-speaking minorities, and particularly Russian-speaking Jews, a more complex nationality-related issue has arisen. Because Russian-speaking minorities who plan to emigrate usually sell their fixed assets, such as apartments and furniture, they usually have cash or other liquid assets in their possession. As a result, all Russian-speaking minorities, including those who have not made plans to leave or who have few assets, have become targets for robberies and break-ins. Since 1991 (first under an unpublished regulation and now by law), Jews who hold visas to emigrate must sell their houses or apartments to city authorities, who pay "a very small amount and only in rubles."²² According to one source, some Jews living in outlying areas have found that, on returning from the capital after obtaining a visa, their housing has been occupied by squatters and they are unable to retrieve even their furnishings.²³ Since Uzbekistan created its own (extremely

²⁰Ilkhamov, Alisher Abrarovich, "Uzbekistan: Ethnosocial Problems of the Transitional Period," *Sotsiologicheskiye Issledovaniya* (Moscow: 8 August 1992, pp. 12-17) as reported in Foreign Broadcast Information Service [FBIS], *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*, 6 November 1992, pp. 79-83.

²¹"Uzbekistan: Information on Whether Uzbeki Citizens Who Marry Non-Muslims or Foreigners are Subject to Harassment," *Documentation, Information and Research Branch, Immigration and Refugee Board* (Ottawa: 4 May 1993), UZB14008. "Uzbekistan: Information on the Treatment of Russians in Uzbekistan," *Documentation, Information and Research Branch, Immigration and Refugee Board* (Ottawa: 9 November 1992), UZB12173. "Examples of Recent Anti-Semitic Incidents in Uzbekistan," *Union of Councils* (Washington, D.C.: 2 June 1992), p. 1. "Aliya From Uzbekistan Increasing," *Jerusalem Post* (Jerusalem: 24 November 1993), p. 11. Garth Wolkoff, "Tears, Fears Found by JCF Leaders in Uzbekistan," *Ethnic NewsWatch* (San Francisco: 5 November 1993) -- as reported in NEXIS database.

²²Yakov Bangiev, "Report From Tashkent," *Monitor* (Washington, D.C.: Union of Councils, 19 June 1993), Vol. III, No. 37. "Examples of Recent Anti-Semitic Incidents in Uzbekistan," *Union of Councils* (Washington, D.C.: 2 June 1992), p. 5.

²³Garth Wolkoff, "Tears, Fears Found by JCF Leaders in Uzbekistan," *Ethnic NewsWatch* (San Francisco: 5 November 1993) -- as reported in NEXIS database.

weak) currency in mid-1994, the concept of payment for property has become even more meaningless.²⁴ This stipulation both makes it less likely that Jews will acquire a residence or business to settle permanently in Uzbekistan, and makes it less possible for those who plan to leave to do so without risking public attention. While this stipulation and the implementation of the laws on citizenship and language are the only public actions taken by the government which could be interpreted as discriminatory, the government's failure to curb violence against and attacks on Russian-speaking minorities indicates that the government is either unwilling or unable to control societal hostility against these minorities. According to the Israeli consulate in New York, societal hostility towards Jews does not generally extend to Uzbekistan's tiny minority of Sephardic (Bukharan) Jews, who speak fluent Uzbek, are generally not emigrating, and who "have a similar life-style to that of the local population."²⁵

Meskhetian Turks

While this paper focuses primarily on political dissidents and Russian-speaking ethnic minorities because these groups are the most likely to seek asylum in the United States, Uzbek policies on two other ethnic groups, Meskhetian Turks and Tajiks, must be mentioned to give a more complete sense of the human rights situation in Uzbekistan. In 1989, the government of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic drove out most of the Meskhetian Turks who were living in

²⁴James Kynge, "Uzbekistan Blasts Speculators As New Money Issued," *Reuters* (London: 28 June 1994) -- as reported in NEXIS database.

²⁵"The Moslem Republics in the U.S.S.R.: Political and Jewish Aspects," *Bulletin Issued by the Consulate General of Israel* (New York: 17 December 1991), p. 3.

Uzbekistan. In 1944, Stalin forcibly relocated Meskhetian Turks from their native lands on the Georgian side of the border between Georgia and Turkey to the Ferghana Valley in Uzbekistan. During the first half of 1989, a series of clashes occurred between the Meskhetians and the Uzbeks in Ferghana Valley. The Soviet central government claimed that the cause of the violence was high unemployment in the region, and failed to intervene when the Uzbek government forcibly evicted the Meskhetians.²⁶ Nor did the Soviet government offer to restore them to their native region of Georgia. Most acquired refugee status in Azerbaijan (and some were later again forced to flee as fighting in Azerbaijan escalated), while others found refuge in Kyrgyzstan. Because few Meskhetian Turks remained in Uzbekistan at the time it declared its independence, few are eligible (and probably fewer willing) to acquire Uzbek citizenship or return to Uzbekistan. It is not known whether any Meskhetians remain in Uzbekistan at present.²⁷

Ethnic Tajiks

While accurate statistics on the total number of Tajiks in Uzbekistan do not exist, there were probably about one million ethnic Tajiks in Uzbekistan at independence.²⁸ Because of rigid

²⁶Ilkhamov, Alisher Abrarovich, "Uzbekistan: Ethnosocial Problems of the Transitional Period," *Sotsiologicheskoye Issledovaniya* (Moscow: 8 August 1992, pp. 12-17) as reported in Foreign Broadcast Information Service [FBIS], *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*, 6 November 1992, pp. 79-83. Korolev, I., "Tashlak: Some Details on Past Events," *Ferganskaya Pravda* (Ferghana, Uzbekistan: 19 June 1989), p. 3.

²⁷"In the Azerbaijan SSR Council of Ministers," *Kommunist* (Baku: Azerinform, 14 February 1990), p. 1. "Meskhetian Refugees from Uzbekistan," *Sovetskoye Kyrgyzstan* (Frunze (now Bishkek), Kyrgyzstan: KirTAG, 18 June 1989), p. 1. "Uzbekistan: The Explosive Ferghana Valley," *Arab Press Service Organisation* (Foster City, California: Ziff Predicasts, 6 September 1993) -- as reported in NEXIS database.

²⁸Ilkhamov, Alisher Abrarovich, "Uzbekistan: Ethnosocial Problems of the Transitional Period," *Sotsiologicheskoye Issledovaniya* (Moscow: 8 August 1992, pp. 12-17) as reported in Foreign Broadcast Information Service [FBIS], *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*, 6 November 1992, pp. 79-83.

press censorship in Uzbekistan, there are few reports of Uzbek governmental repression of Tajiks. There is considerable evidence, however, that such repression is widespread and brutal. One of the major organizations representing ethnic Tajiks in Uzbekistan is the Samarkand Movement. The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe has reported that "the Samarkand Movement, which claims to defend the rights of Tajiks in Uzbekistan, reportedly is routinely harassed by the authorities. The government persistently charges the group with promoting separatism, though its leaders deny this charge, stating that they advocate no border changes."²⁹ In July 1992, it was reported that Tajik schools were being closed and that the Samarkand Tajik University had been closed. The reason given was that relations between the republics of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan had worsened.³⁰ Subsequently, the head of the Samarkand Movement, Uktam Bektukhmedov, was abducted by agents of Uzbek security in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) following the International Conference on Human Rights and the Fate of the Nation.³¹ He was returned to Uzbekistan and sentenced to ten days in prison for "insulting militia officers."³²

It is impossible to determine if Uzbekistan's policy toward the Tajiks is driven by its changing relations with Tajikistan, the fear that Uzbekistan's Tajiks will become organized to

²⁹Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, "Uzbekistan," *Implementation of the Helsinki Accords: Human Rights and Democratization in the Newly Independent States* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, January, 1993), p. 212.

³⁰"Tajik University Closed" (Moscow: *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 17 July 1992, p. 6) as reported in Foreign Broadcast Information Service [FBIS], *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*, 5 August 1992, pp. 120-121.

³¹Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, "Uzbekistan," *Implementation of the Helsinki Accords: Human Rights and Democratization in the Newly Independent States of the Former Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 1993), p. 218.

³²Pulatov, Abdumannob, "'Evil Empire' In The East: Uzbek Civil Rights Advocates Sought Out Even In Moscow" (Moscow: *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, 26 February 1993, p. 2) as reported in Foreign Broadcast Information Service [FBIS], *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*, 12 March 1993, pp. 86-87.

demand sovereignty or to support one side in the war in Tajikistan as more Tajik refugees attempt to cross into Uzbekistan, or by conscious anti-Tajik sentiment.³³ Whatever its motivation, the Uzbek government has refused safe haven to Tajik refugees fleeing the war in Tajikistan: in July and August 1992, more than 30,000 Tajik refugees were returned to Tajikistan by Uzbek authorities. While some Tajik refugees were permitted to come to Uzbekistan in October 1992, the government sealed the border in December 1992. As late as January 1994, Tajik refugees in camps in Afghanistan accused Uzbekistan of being responsible for a bombing of their camp.³⁴ Relations between the Uzbek government and ethnic Tajiks, both those who are from Uzbekistan, and those who have fled into Uzbekistan from Tajikistan, remain poor.³⁵

OPPOSITION MOVEMENTS

Although Karimov strongly opposed the formation of opposition movements in Uzbekistan, some were formed during the late Soviet era. Birlik ('unity'), formed in May 1989, advocated democratization, political pluralism and secularism. Although it operated as a political movement for several years, it was not permitted to register as a party and was banned a few years after independence. Erk ('will,' 'freedom') broke away from Birlik in 1990 and was permitted to register as a political party in 1991, but was also banned immediately after

³³Umar Ongov, "Uzbekistan Pumps Out Natural Resources From Tajikistan," *Russica Information Inc.* (Moscow: Russian Press Digest, 21 July 1994) -- as reported on NEXIS database.

³⁴"Opposition Radio Says Russia or Uzbekistan Responsible for Refugee Bombing," *British Broadcasting Corporation* (London: 27 January 1994) -- as reported in NEXIS database.

³⁵Department of State, "Uzbekistan," *Country Reports On Human Rights Practices For 1992* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 1993), p. 973.

independence.³⁶ The Islamic Renaissance Party, whose membership includes both moderate and militant Muslims, was also banned, as was the Party of Free Peasants (closely associated with Erk), the Green Party (which grew out of the Committee to Save the Aral Sea and was closely associated with Birlik), and the People's Movement of Turkestan (which advocates the unity of Central Asia as one entity called Turkestan). The Society for Human Rights, founded in Tashkent in February 1992, was also refused registration by the government as a non-political organization, as was the ethnic-based Tajik Society, also called the Samarkand Movement.³⁷ Some of these parties were banned on the grounds that Uzbek law does not allow political parties to form on the basis of ethnicity or religion (such as the Islamic Renaissance Party and the People's Movement of Turkestan, and a group formed during the independence era, Milli Majlis, which was disbanded because it claimed "the basics of the study of Islam" as one of its principles and called for Islam to be given the status of state religion of the republic).³⁸ The Helsinki Commission has reported that the Turkestan group has been severely repressed since its inception, and that the Samarkand Movement "is routinely harassed by authorities."³⁹ Eleven members of Adolat ('justice'), an Islam-

³⁶Wendy Sloane, "Uzbekistan Cracks Down On Human Rights Activists," *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston: 24 May 1994), p. 7.

³⁷Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Implementation of the Helsinki Accords: Human Rights and Democratization in the Newly Independent States of the Former Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 1993), pp. 205-206.

³⁸Department of State, "Uzbekistan," *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1992* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 1993), p. 975. Helsinki Watch, *Human Rights in Uzbekistan* (Washington, D.C.: Helsinki Watch, May 1993), p. 31.

³⁹Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, "Uzbekistan," *Implementation of the Helsinki Accords: Human Rights and Democratization in the Newly Independent States of the Former Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 1993), p. 212.

oriented activist group, were arrested in March 1992, for trying to establish Shari'at courts (Islamic law courts) as alternatives to the present court system.⁴⁰

However, the government has also established a pattern of persecuting opposition groups and opposition leaders whose mandate does not specifically contradict Uzbek law. One of the most famous examples was the treatment of Uzbek opposition leaders and human rights advocates who attempted to attend a human rights conference in neighboring Kyrgyzstan in December 1992. Several members of banned opposition groups in Uzbekistan who planned to travel from Uzbekistan to Kyrgyzstan to attend the conference were arrested by the Uzbek police before their departure and told that if they attended the conference, they would be arrested on return and charged with violating a 1988 law against "unauthorized meetings."⁴¹ Following the conference, Uzbek security forces, acting either with the co-operation or acquiescence of Kyrgyz security forces, seized Abdumannob Pulatov, chairman of the Society for the Protection of Human Rights in Uzbekistan, and leader of the Uzbek delegation to the Bishkek conference, outside his hotel in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and abducted him back to Uzbekistan to stand trial for participating in the conference.⁴² Although Pulatov was quickly tried and sentenced to three years

⁴⁰Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, "Uzbekistan," *Implementation of the Helsinki Accords: Human Rights and Democratization in the Newly Independent States of the Former Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 1993), p. 212.

⁴¹Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, "Uzbekistan," *Implementation of the Helsinki Accords: Human Rights and Democratization in the Newly Independent States of the Former Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 1993), p. 217.

⁴²President Akayev of Kyrgyzstan responded to the incident by removing from his security forces those officials who had colluded with the Uzbek security forces. The incident, however, raised the question of the ability of post-Soviet states to control their security forces even when the top government officials are strongly committed to democracy. "After Pulatov Amnesty, Uzbek Opposition Struggles Against Continued Repression," *Monitor: Digest of News and Analysis from Soviet Successor States* (Washington, D.C.: Union of Councils of Soviet Jews, Vol. IV, No.3/February 19, 1993), p. 12.

for "insulting the dignity of President Islam Karimov," international pressure later led to an amnesty for Pulatov, who is now living in exile.⁴³ The Uzbek security services have also kidnapped Uzbek dissidents in Kazakhstan and Russia, charging them on political and criminal grounds. Dissidents are also routinely detained before and after visits of foreign dignitaries.⁴⁴

Almost all of the few other opposition leaders who have openly challenged governmental authority and policies through peaceful means have been jailed or beaten (on occasion in the presence of Western diplomats).⁴⁵ As happened with increasing frequency in the late Soviet period, Uzbekistan represses its opposition forces not just through indefinite detentions and charges which are clearly political (such as defaming the President), but also through criminal charges (everything from public drunkenness to narcotics trafficking, hooliganism, and attacking police officers), and through such informal means as street muggings (in which dissidents are beaten with steel bars or other weapons), robberies, police beatings and other forms of physical violence engineered by the security services.⁴⁶ Despite constitutional guarantees, freedom of speech is severely limited. Censorship is widely practiced. The Uzbek government has banned a number of Russian newspapers, including *Izvestiya*, *Moscow Times*, *New Times* and the *Mustakil*

⁴³IBHR, "Kyrgyzstan To Remove Officials Who Colluded With Uzbeks," *Monitor: Digest of News and Analysis from Soviet Successor States* (Washington, D.C.: Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, Vol. IV, No.6/February 12, 1993), p. 1.

⁴⁴Wendy Sloane, "Uzbekistan Cracks Down On Human Rights Activists," *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston: 24 May 1994), p. 7.

⁴⁵Nadira Artykova, "Uzbekistan Gains Reputation as Human Rights Violator," *Agence France Presse* (Paris: 18 April 1994) -- as reported on NEXIS database.

⁴⁶Nadira Artykova, "Uzbekistan Gains Reputation as Human Rights Violator," *Agence France Presse* (Paris: 18 April 1994) -- as reported on NEXIS database.

Khaftalik ("Independent Weekly").⁴⁷ The paper sponsored by the banned political organization Birlik was never permitted to register, and the paper sponsored by Erk was heavily censored during the period when Erk was recognized as a registered group.⁴⁸

Assessing the situation in his testimony before the Congressional Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Abdumannob Pulatov concluded that "the situation for human rights in Uzbekistan is terrible, similar to that in the 1970s ... The old political structures still exist with only the names changed. Political terror is used. There is no freedom of speech or conscience. Meetings and demonstrations are prohibited."⁴⁹ Helsinki Watch concurred, but qualified its assessment by stating that "although restrictions of freedom of speech and peaceful assembly circumscribe civil and political freedoms for the general population of the republic, certain specific groups of individuals suffer disproportionately. They are human rights activists, members of the political opposition, and unaffiliated individuals who have expressed public criticism of government officials."⁵⁰ Pennsylvania Senator Arlen Specter recently lodged a public complaint

⁴⁷Department of State, "Uzbekistan," *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1992* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 1993), p. 972. Naftalin, Micah, "On the Situation in Central Asia," *Statement before the Commission on Security and Cooperation's Hearing on the Situation in Central Asia* (Washington, D.C.: March, 25, 1993). Ilgam Safarov, Said Akbar, "Uzbekistan On Information Diet," *Russica Information, Inc.* (Moscow: Russian Press Digest, 8 September 1993) -- as reported in NEXIS database.

⁴⁸Pulatov, Abdumannob, "On the Situation in Central Asia," *Statement at the Commission of Security and Cooperation's Hearing on the Situation in Central Asia* (Washington, D.C.: March 25, 1993), p. 9. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, "Uzbekistan," *Implementation of the Helsinki Accords: Human Rights and Democratization in the Newly Independent Republics of the Former Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 1993), p. 215.

⁴⁹Pulatov, Abdumannob, "On the Situation in Central Asia," *Hearings before the Commission on Security and Cooperation on the Situation in Central Asia* (Washington, D.C.: March 25, 1993), p. 9.

⁵⁰Helsinki Watch, *Human Rights in Uzbekistan* (Washington, D.C.: Helsinki Watch, May 1993), p. 1.

when two dissidents with whom he had scheduled discussions during his visit to Uzbekistan were detained to prevent them from meeting him.⁵¹

UZBEK CONSTITUTION, LAWS ON CITIZENSHIP AND LANGUAGE

The Uzbek Constitution, adopted in December 1992, embodies on paper many democratic principles which in practice are violated -- freedom of speech and assembly being the most obvious examples.⁵² The Law on Citizenship, passed in July 1992, states that anyone permanently living in Uzbekistan at the time the law went into force (later in 1992), regardless of race, religion, or nationality, is a citizen of Uzbekistan (the "zero option") if the person has no other citizenship and expresses the desire to be a citizen of Uzbekistan. Anyone who states a desire to become a citizen and is either born in the territory of Uzbekistan, or can prove that either parent, or a grandmother or grandfather, was born in Uzbek territory has a right to apply for Uzbek citizenship (whether or not the person was living in Uzbekistan at the time of the decree). Those who are automatically granted the right to Uzbek citizenship include former residents of Uzbekistan who were forcibly removed from Uzbek territory by a prior government, and who may therefore have acquired citizenship elsewhere but prefer to return to Uzbekistan. In addition, anyone who has lived for five years in Uzbekistan and who has renounced, or will renounce, foreign citizenship, is eligible for Uzbek citizenship. Those who are stateless but who have

⁵¹"U.S. Senator Criticizes Uzbekistan on Human Rights," *Reuters* (London: 3 June 1994) -- as reported in NEXIS database.

⁵²Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Implementation of the Helsinki Accords: Human Rights and Democratization in the Newly Independent States of the Former Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 1993), p. 207-208.

established permanent residence in Uzbekistan may also become citizens. Citizenship in Uzbekistan is lost through entering the military or security services of another state, living abroad for five years without registering with an Uzbek consulate, adopting (or failing to renounce) citizenship elsewhere, or renouncing Uzbek citizenship. Those who are ineligible for Uzbek citizenship include those who a) advocate violent change of the constitutional structure of Uzbekistan; b) belong to parties or organizations whose activity is incompatible with the constitutional principles of the Republic of Uzbekistan; or c) have been convicted for actions which can be prosecuted under the laws of the Republic of Uzbekistan.⁵³

No language requirement is imposed on those who wish to establish citizenship, but Uzbek is now the state language. According to the Department of State "non-Uzbek speakers increasingly feel themselves threatened... When government organs and academic institutions (currently the overwhelming majority of jobs in Uzbekistan) are compelled to reduce their work force, it is frequently the Russian-speaking minorities who lose their jobs."⁶⁴ However, the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe maintains that as long as Russian-speaking minorities have been given the opportunity to learn the local language during the transition from Russian to Uzbek, "the language laws passed in all of the former Soviet republics are not in and of themselves violations of anyone's human rights."⁶⁵ Despite protests from the Russian government,

⁵³"On Citizenship in the Republic of Uzbekistan," *Uzbek Republic Law On Citizenship* (Tashkent: 28 July 1992) as reported in Foreign Broadcast Information Service [FBIS], Daily Report: *Central Eurasia*, 24 September 1992, pp. 178.

⁵⁴Department of State, "Uzbekistan," *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1992* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 1993), p. 975.

⁵⁵"Draft Copy Of Paper On Tajikistan," letter from Patricia Carley, Helsinki Commission (Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe), to John Evans, Resource Information Center, 28 June 1993.

and local Russian-speaking minorities, the Uzbek citizenship law specifically forbids the holding of dual nationality. Because even those who have an automatic right to citizenship must take affirmative action to claim it, it is likely that many Russian-speaking minorities in Uzbekistan, and possibly also other Turkic minorities, will chose not to take Uzbek citizenship. Unless they apply for citizenship in another state, many will become stateless as the period for electing Uzbek citizenship expires.⁵⁶

RELIGION

While the population of Uzbekistan is predominantly Sunni Muslim, there are also substantial settlements of Christians and Jews. Freedom of religion is guaranteed by Uzbekistan's constitution, with the exception of a ban on religious-based political parties, and most religious groups have, in fact, been allowed to practice their faith openly without being disturbed by government authority. The major exception among non-Muslims is Christian Pentecostals, who have complained that the government refused to recognize their church, and the German Lutherans, concentrated in Tashkent, who have complained that their church, built in 1899 and closed by Stalin in 1937, has still not been returned to them by the government.⁵⁷

The practice of Islam by Muslim communities is tolerated, but Islamic movements which have, or are perceived by the government as having, a political component are routinely harassed

⁵⁶Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, "Uzbekistan," *Implementation of the Helsinki Accords: Human Rights and Democratization in the Newly Independent States of the Former Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 1993), p. 208.

⁵⁷Department of State, "Uzbekistan," *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1992* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 1993), p. 972.

and banned. For instance, the Islamic Renaissance Party is banned under the Law on Public Organizations, which forbids political parties based on religion. As noted above, eleven members of the Adolat ("Justice") Party, which sought to establish Islamic law courts (Shari'at) as an alternative to the secular court system were arrested in March of 1992.⁵⁸

In this sense, the Uzbek government's intolerance of religious movements is more on political than strictly religious grounds. While religious groups are not being harassed by the government for practicing their religion, groups which are identified with political ideologies -- as Jews are with the pro-democracy or pro-reform movement throughout the former Soviet Union -- could face risk for their real or perceived anti-government political beliefs or activities.

⁵⁸Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, "Uzbekistan," *Implementation of the Helsinki Accords: Human Rights and Democratization in the Newly Independent States of the Former Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 1993), p. 212. Lerman Usmanov, "Will The 'Islamic Factor' Determine Uzbekistan's Future?" *Russica Information, Inc.* (Moscow: Russian Press Digest, 6 January 1994) -- as reported in NEXIS database. "India, Uzbekistan Vow to Fight Religious Fundamentalism," *Associated Press* (New York: 5 January 1994) -- as reported in NEXIS database.

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