

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 29, 2020

His Excellency Shavkat Mirziyoyev  
President of the Republic of Uzbekistan  
Kuksaroy Presidential Palace  
Tashkent  
Republic of Uzbekistan

Dear President Mirziyoyev:

We are writing to request that you release detainees currently serving sentences for peacefully expressing their views, including members of student groups, activists, and human rights defenders. Individuals should never be imprisoned for exercising their rights of freedom of assembly, association, and speech, and we urge you to release without preconditions your citizens currently in detention for these legitimate acts. We recognize and welcome your recent steps to date to release some detainees and initiate reforms. Further actions in this regard would serve to significantly improve the lives of your citizens and the bilateral relationship between our countries.

We call for releasing these individuals on the merits of their cases, but today, we also urge you to act quickly on health and humanitarian grounds. While all nations and citizens have been affected by the global COVID-19 pandemic, the risks to the detainee population are particularly acute given the enclosed living conditions. Our own country, like many others, has taken the extraordinary step to grant some prisoners early release in an effort to stop the spread of COVID-19. This move allows facilities to increase their ability to follow social distancing recommendations and ensure standards of medical care for the remaining population.

We encourage you to seize this opportunity during this global crisis by releasing these individuals. While we write regarding all individuals detained in relation to acts of peaceful expression, we draw your attention to two cases in particular:

First, we understand that **Iskandar Khudaiberganov** was convicted of “terrorism,” “premeditated, aggravated murder,” and “attempting to overthrow the constitutional order.” At the time of his arrest, Khudaiberganov served as chairman of the Center of Democratic Initiatives. He was sentenced to death, though he is currently facing a life sentence following the abolition of the death penalty. According to Human Rights Watch, his conviction was based on confessions obtained under torture and witness statements that were later retracted in court. We call for his immediate release.

Second, we urge you to take action on the case of **Akrom Malikov**, who served as a researcher at the Institute of Handicrafts of the Academy of Sciences and a blogger at the time of his arrest. Authorities detained Mr. Malikov in July 2016 on extremism charges for allegedly writing articles for the People’s Movement under a pseudonym. A court convicted him of plotting to overthrow the government and sentenced him to six years in prison with a release date of 2022. We call for his immediate release.

We thank you for your consideration of our request and urge swift action on these cases.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



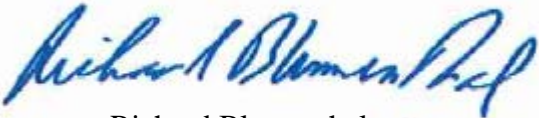
Mitt Romney  
United States Senator



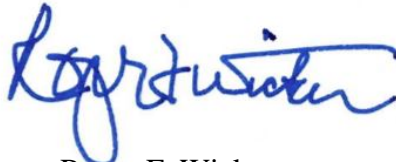
Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Thom Tillis  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



Roger F. Wicker  
United States Senator

**/s/ Robert P. Casey, Jr.**

Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy  
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator

**/s/ Chris Van Hollen**

Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator