



AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL

Saidzhakhon Zainabitdinov, PoC, Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan – HRD – POC – 2000s – Freedom of Expression and Association

“You are the hero!”

Saidzhakhon Zainabitdinov, Chairperson of the human rights organization Appelliatsia ('Appeal'), was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment in Uzbekistan in January 2006. Thousands of Amnesty International members and activists wrote letters and signed petitions on his behalf. Saidzhakhon Zainabitdinov was released from prison in February 2008, just two years into his sentence.

In May 2005, Uzbekistani security forces opened fire on protestors in the city of Andizhan, killing hundreds, including women and children. As Chairperson of the human rights organization Appelliatsia ('Appeal'), Saidzhakhon Zainabitdinov monitored the protests in Andizhan and gave accounts of the events to the international media. His testimony was in stark contrast to the official version of events. He was detained on 21 May 2005 and, the following January, sentenced to seven years' imprisonment for “spreading information with the aim of causing panic”.

Campaigning on Saidzhakhon Zainabitdinov's behalf began even before he was tried. Within months of his imprisonment, Amnesty International members and activists from 20 countries wrote to Saidzhakhon Zainabitdinov in prison and to his family. Saidzhakhon Zainabitdinov's family received nearly 10,000 letters, including 4,470 letters from the UK alone, from 260 separate UK towns and cities. Activists also wrote to the Uzbekistani authorities and signed petitions calling for Saidzhakhon Zainabitdinov's release.

Saidzhakhon Zainabitdinov was unexpectedly released from prison on 4 February 2008. Following his release, he wrote to one Amnesty International member in Scotland, saying:

“True, I was put into prison unjustly. I suffered and lived through many difficult days. But I am not a hero. You are the hero! Your compatriots and other people in the world who wrote to me saying “We think of you”, “You are always in our thoughts” - are the heroes... you and thousands of people just like yourself, were saving the life of a human being. In this case you have saved me. The real heroes are those who save other people”.

[Stories of Success / Saidzhakhon Zainabitdinov - Portrait on ADAM](#)