



United States Mission to the OSCE

Release of Uzbekistani Editor Muhammad Bekjanov

As prepared for delivery by Chargé d' Affaires Kate M. Byrnes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The United States welcomes the release of former editor of the opposition "Erk" newspaper Muhammad Bekjanov after almost 18 years in prison. We are happy to see that he has been reunited with members of his family resident in Uzbekistan.

Mr. Bekjanov had been one of the longest imprisoned journalists in the world, and his sentence had been extended several times for alleged infractions of prison rules.

We regard Mr. Bekjanov's release as a positive step on the part of the government of Uzbekistan. We urge Uzbekistan to continue to build upon this momentum by releasing other long-held journalists, activists, and religious prisoners.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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