



## 2012 OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

### ***Written Intervention by the Initiative Group of Independent Human Rights Defenders of Uzbekistan, International Partnership for Human Rights and the Netherlands Helsinki Committee***

#### **Working Session 2 (Fundamental Freedoms II), Tuesday 25 September 2012:**

#### **Repression of peaceful protests in Uzbekistan**

The authorities of Uzbekistan seriously restrict freedom of assembly, even if article 33 of the Constitution of Uzbekistan protects the right to hold rallies, assemblies and demonstrations and states that authorities may suspend or ban such events “exclusively on the grounds of security”.

There is no specific law regulating the conduct of assemblies and existing regulations (such as a government decree from 2003 establishing rules for holding mass events) are not implemented in a clear and consistent way. Typically there is no response from authorities to letters from citizens announcing plans to hold assemblies. Small-scale peaceful pickets, which are staged by civil society activists and other citizens to demand respect for fundamental rights and freedoms are broken up by police and participants are subjected to intimidation, detentions and administrative sanctions in the form of fines or arrests of 10-15 days for “violating the order of organizing and conducting assemblies” (under article 201 of the Administrative Code).

- On numerous occasions in 2012, representatives of the Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan, as well as the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan have been detained and fined or given administrative arrests for holding pickets in the cities of Tashkent and Karshi.
- In June 2012 members of the human rights NGO *Ezgulik* were subjected to house arrest when they were planning to hold a picket outside the Kyrgyz embassy in Tashkent in connection with the two-year anniversary of the inter-ethnic violence in southern Kyrgyzstan. Activists from the opposition movement *Birdamlik* were arrested outside the Kyrgyz embassy immediately after arriving there to carry out a protest action related to the anniversary. They were brought to a district police station, where they were held for about 10 hours before they were released. Later three of the activists were fined under article 201 of the Administrative Code.
- On 28 February 2012, human rights defender Abdillo Tozhiboi–ugli was detained as soon as he began picketing outside the office of the Tashkent city administration to protest against the policies of local authorities with respect to electricity and gas supply. He was brought to a district police station, where he was held for about 12 hours. According to the activist, he was placed in a cage that is normally used for police dogs and his cell phone was confiscated. Later the same day he was brought to the Mirobadskoe district criminal court, where he was fined some 4.5 million soms (about 1200 EUR according to the unofficial rate).

**Recommendation to the authorities of Uzbekistan:**

- Respect the right to freedom of assembly and allow peaceful protests to take place without participants facing dispersals, detentions, administrative sanctions and other forms of interference and punishment by authorities.