

## Oh President Mirziyoyev! Stop Re-Arresting and Torturing Innocent Pious Muslims in Uzbekistan

In Uzbekistan, authorities under the current leadership of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, are intent on taking the country back to the dark and bloody days of the evil tyrant Karimov - the West's murderous ally against Islam and the enemy of Muslims. The Karimov 'garbage regime' was internationally known for waging a relentless and evil campaign against the dawah carries of Hizb ut Tahrir from the 1990's after the collapse of the USSR until his excruciating and painful death in 2016. During that oppressive era, tens of thousands of Muslim men and women who did not subscribe to Karimov's secular version of Islam, were rounded up by the authorities and unlawfully arrested, tortured in jail and many killed in extra-judicial executions. Uzbek Muslim women during this period had been threatened with gang rape during interrogations. Elderly women were not excluded from such evil acts, forcing their sons to confess to fictitious terrorism charges.

We remember the martyrs of this period, who were 'unsung heroes', like Umar 'Aleef Hasan, who was arrested for his membership of Hizb ut Tahrir and whose body when returned to his family, had signs of sever torture. He was famously recorded in 1999 when threatened by guards with torture to his liver by saying, "What is one liver! I will sacrifice a thousand livers in the path of Islam!". Farhad Usmanov who was arrested in 1999 for possessing and distributing a leaflet, stood firm against Karimov's henchmen who demanded he seeks forgiveness from Karimov or apologise for worshipping Allah (swt)! He was recorded to have stood firm and rather face the pounding fists and batons on his face and limbs and face being electrocuted until his skin burnt, then apologise for being Allah's (swt) slave! Muzafar Avazov, aged 35, and a father of 4 children, was sent to the notorious Jaslyk Prison in the autonomous region of Karakalpakstan and faced the most barbaric form of torture that included being boiled to death, with more than seventy percent of his body burnt! May Allah (swt) accept all our brothers as martyrs!

What then, can the Ummah expect from Uzbekistan's current President Mirziyoyev, who for the last seven years, went so far as to characterise his presidency as being that of a "new Uzbekistan"? There is nothing new about a presidency that continues to follow in the footsteps of the perished Karimov, by wrongly returning thirty-nine Muslim brothers from Hizb ut Tahrir to prison for up to seventeen years after serving their twenty-four-year unjust prison sentence! These pious men have endured extremely harsh conditions during their unjust imprisonment and under Mirziyev they continue to be forced to sign confessions under threats of rape of their wives and arrest of their children. It should be noted that these Shabab have no connection with terrorism. The charges against them now are no different from those brought against them in 1999. None of them have anything to do with crimes stipulated in Articles 159 and 244 of the National Penal Code. Therefore, the inclusion of Hizb ut Tahrir on the list of terrorist organisations in Uzbekistan is completely baseless. These men are convicted merely for their Islamic thoughts and beliefs! These pious men speak the truth without fearing the blame of anyone except Allah (swt). ﴿وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ قَوْلًا مِّمَّنْ دَعَا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا وَقَالَ إِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ﴾ **“And whose words are better than someone who calls others to Allah, does good, and says, “I am truly one of the Muslims.”**? [TMQ Surah Al-Fussilat 41:33]

It's not surprising for the international media to be quiet about these crimes, but human rights organisations like Human Rights Watch and the Uzbek Forum, who commonly reveal human rights abuses in Uzbekistan, are strangely silent concerning this matter. Why is there no media coverage of the wrongful re-arrest of these thirty-nine Muslim men and the torture they face in prison? Uzbekistan has ratified more than eighty international documents in the field of human rights and freedoms, including the UN's Convention against Torture. Will you not hold President Mirziyoyev to account like you did during the Karimov presidency?

It hasn't gone unnoticed that the government in Uzbekistan is following the example of Russia by closing the door to any criticism from 'undesirable foreigners' by deporting them if they offend the country and its population, making reporting inside the country dangerous for journalists, academics and researchers. However, reporting outside Tashkent is certainly another way human rights researcher can bring a spotlight to these ongoing crimes against innocent Muslim men that continue from the butcher Karimov until today.

Lastly, what explains the return of President Mirziyoyev's approach of following the footsteps of Karimov's oppression, arrest, and torture of Muslims in Uzbekistan? It indicates that the matter is an implementation of the desires and policies of the colonialist leaders in Russia and America. It also indicates that the rulers of Uzbekistan do not have the right to decide their political affairs and ultimately are nothing but agents of colonialism.

Mirziyoyev must release the Shabab of Hizb ut Tahrir without delay and must stop the persecution of those who carry the message of Islam. You will only fail like your predecessor Karimov 'the Butcher' did, in your attempts to expunge the word Khilafah and the desire to live under Islam from the hearts and minds of Muslims in Uzbekistan.

﴿كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَأَغْلِبَنَّ أَنَا وَرُسُلِي إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ﴾

***“Allah has decreed, “I and My messengers will certainly prevail.” Surely Allah is All Powerful, Almighty.”*** [TMQ Surah Al-Mujadillah 58:21]

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