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10 May 2010

To:
H.E President Islam Karimov
President of Uzbekistan

Your Excellency,


I write to express my extreme concern about the unfair trial and sentencing of Mr. Maksim Popov, psychologist, HIV/AIDS activist, and founder of NGO Izis, to seven years imprisonment for selflessly serving the people of Uzbekistan to educate them about prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and promotion of healthy lifestyles.

I believe that the charges against Maxim Popov, including "promoting homosexuality", "corrupting minors in anti-social behaviour" and "embezzlement" of funds received from international donors were politically motivated and contradictory to national and international law. To date, none of the charges relating to embezzlement have been confirmed by the international donors themselves, and no such allegations of misuse of funds have been made against Popov earlier in relation to his work.

Further, his book on HIV/AIDS, which primarily explains STD prevention, was deemed "illegal" by the criminal court of Tashkent, finding it as "disrespectful of the national culture and the Uzbek People." This verdict, denying Popov his fundamental rights to freedom of expression, is in breach of not only national constitutional guarantees, but also Uzbekistan's commitments under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Maksim Popov is one tragic case, but I know that arbitrary detention is widespread and ongoing in your country. I urge you to immediately and unconditionally release Mr. Popov and all other individuals unjustly imprisoned and denied their basic human rights to peaceful expression, association and assembly.

Sincerely,


SECRETARY GENERAL

Ingrid Srinath
Secretary General
CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation