



**24<sup>th</sup> session of the  
Human Rights Council  
Item 6**

**Consideration of UPR reports: Uzbekistan  
Delivered by Renate Bloem**

Thank you Mr. President,

This is a joint statement by CIVICUS and the Expert Working Group, a human rights policy organization based in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

The Human Rights Council's review of Uzbekistan occurs at a time when the government continues to imprison activists and human rights defenders at an alarming rate for undertaking their legitimate and peaceful work.

Despite the government's acceptance of a number of recommendations committing to advancing judicial reform in accordance with international law, at least 15 civil society activists remain imprisoned on politically motivated charges. A number of those imprisoned were not provided guarantees under fair trial and due process standards and were sentenced to lengthy prison terms ranging from 10-15 years. Several of the detained activists, including Azam Turgunov, Dilmurod Saidov, have experienced acute deterioration of their health, while at least seven others have reported being subject to ill treatment or torture while in custody.

While CIVICUS and the Expert Working Group welcome Uzbekistan's decision to allow unfettered regular access of the ICRC to detention and prison facilities, it is reported that prison authorities routinely transfer imprisoned activists to other penal institutions prior to ICRC visits to prevent an objective assessment of the activists' condition.

Following Uzbekistan's examination during the 16<sup>th</sup> Session of the UPR, the Government of Uzbekistan has shown a flagrant disregard for international law by continuing to persecute human rights activists. Most recently on 23 August 2013, 75-year-old human rights activist Mr. Turaboy Juraev from Jizzak Region was sentenced to 5 years in prison on spurious charges of extortion and fraud. Also in August, prominent Uzbek human rights activist Ms. Nadejda Atayeva was sentenced in absentia to 7 years for embezzlement in an apparent reprisal for Atayeva's work with the Central Asian Association for Human Rights.

We encourage the government to adopt recommendations eliminating unjustified restrictions on freedom of association for religious groups. Independent observers estimate that there are currently 6,000-10,000 religious prisoners in Uzbekistan, the significant majority of most of who practice Islam. We urge the Uzbek Government to release all prisoners of conscience detained for peacefully expressing their religious beliefs.

Thank you for your attention.