



## FSU NEWS April 2018

News and action updates on the Former Soviet Union

Amnesty International UK

**WELCOME** to the latest issue of FSU News, the newsletter from the Country Coordinators Team at AIUK for the Former Soviet Union.

It's only a month since our last newsletter, in time for this year's National Conference and AGM in Swansea. **Pauline Uytendijk** has now left us so we'd like to thank her for all she has done for the region (and edited the newsletter). If you know anyone interested in our region or would like to have a chat, please do get in touch (contact details at the end). We'll be at the AGM so do come and see us.

Remember to let us know what you've been doing or are planning to do, and share any FSU actions you've taken part in ***Do use the links in your tweets, on the Facebook page or website of your group and pass it on to your members...***

**Don't forget we're on Facebook:** [Amnesty International UK Former Soviet Union](#)

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### AZERBAIJAN

#### Wife of exiled journalist murdered in France

**Rahim Namazov** fled Azerbaijan in 2010 after receiving death threats and having been imprisoned.

On 30 March, his wife was killed in a gun attack in Colomiers, near Toulouse. He was seriously wounded.

Police say seven bullets were fired in the attack outside their home: <https://www.thelocal.fr/20180330/exiled-azerbaijani-journalist-shot-and-wife-murdered-near-toulouse>

### GEORGIA

#### Amnesty International Report launch

For the first time ever, the AI Annual Report was launched on 22 February in Tbilisi, Georgia.

It gathered overwhelming media attention and was the top story on Georgian TV channels.

As well as government ministers, **Mustafa Cabuk**, a Turkish teacher in Georgia at risk of extradition to Turkey for Gullen-related accusations (which we campaigned against), also attended.

The Report was also launched in **Russia** (Moscow), **Ukraine** (Kyiv and Kharkiv), and **Kazakhstan** (Almaty)

### RUSSIAN FEDERATION

#### Memorial's Head remains detained



The pre-trial detention of **Oyub Titiev**, head of **Memorial's** office in Grozny, Chechnya has been extended to 9 May.

Amnesty International calls on the Russian authorities to [free Oyub immediately, drop all charges](#), and end the coordinated assault carried out against **Memorial** and other human rights organizations across the country, and investigate the circumstances surrounding this saga of injustice.

**Sirzhutdin Datsiev**, head of their office in Dagestan, also in the North Caucasus, was brutally assaulted outside his home on 28 March and needed treatment in hospital. This continues the spate of attacks on staff and property in the North Caucasus and the complete impunity for the perpetrators. [Amnesty International condemned](#) the continuing lack of action by the authorities.

#### Jehovah's Witness faces 10 years in jail



© Jehovah's Witnesses

[Human Rights Watch](#) reports that **Dennis Christensen**, a 46-year old Danish citizen who has been in pre-trial custody for nearly 11 months, faces charges of organizing activities of an "extremist organization".

A local court banned the organization as an "extremist religious organization" in 2016. Riot police raided a service where he'd given a sermon.

Russia's Supreme Court banned all JW organizations throughout the country in April 2017.

Amnesty International issued a [public statement](#) shortly after the ruling, declaring it an assault on freedom of assembly and conscience, and declaring anyone imprisoned for their faith will be prisoners of conscience and must be released.

### FIFA World Cup

[Peter Tatchell](#) has asked Boris Johnson, Foreign Secretary, for assurances that LGBT+ fans will be safe from violence and arrest. He says "Detailed travel advice is imperative. There will be many fans travelling to this toxic homophobic environment and we have a duty to ensure they are well informed about the dangers and how to get help if they are victimised."

According to a study commissioned by *Bonus Code Bets*, 39% of Russians said it was likely that someone would attack foreign LGBT+ fans during the competition. 16 to 24-year-olds thought an attack was "highly likely".

The campaign kicks off on 14 May.

### Good News: Ali Feruz is free!



**Ali Feruz** was released on 16 February and flew to Germany. This followed the 25 January Supreme Court ruling to uphold his appeal not to be returned to Uzbekistan.

## BELARUS

### Cyclist Dzmitry Paliyenka Jailed

23-year old Belarusian activist **Dzmitry Paliyenka** is serving a two-year prison sentence for peacefully opposing restrictions on cyclists.

He was found guilty of "violence or threat of violence against an employee of law enforcement agencies" and "production and distribution of pornographic materials or items of pornographic character" The invented charges related to a cycling event which took place in Minsk, the Belarusian capital, in April 2016.

He has endured harsh treatment in jail, spending a third of the time in solitary confinement and has had spending money cut by the same amount. He hasn't received any mail and some he writes have not been sent.

He was transferred to a prison hospital on 27 March after we called for him to receive medical treatment for his asthma and a leg wound. [Please take action.](#)

## UKRAINE

### Human Rights to be taught in schools

For the first time ever, the Ukrainian government has approved a new curriculum for primary schools with a human rights component. AI Ukraine took part in the working group on curriculum development.

### Trial of Crimean Tatar Emir-Usein Kuku



On 14-15 February, Amnesty International attended **Emir-Usein Kuku's** trial. **Emir** is a Crimean Tatar human rights defender from Russian-occupied Crimea standing trial

with five co-defendants in a Russian military court in Rostov-on-Don.

AI Ukraine Director Oksana Pokalchuk collected messages of solidarity from Emir-Usein's numerous supporters on Facebook and passed them to him via his lawyer. His lawyer said Emir-Usein is very thankful to Amnesty International and everyone who supports him.

### Police must protect Women's Rights activists

Across Ukraine, there were ugly scenes when peaceful demonstrators marking International Women's Day on 8 March were set upon by far-right groups.

Police claimed they could not protect people against far-right organizations. In Uzhgorod, six people drenched the marchers in red paint. One organizer, a women's rights and LGBTI activist, had to be treated

for burns to her eye following the attack. Police briefly detained the attackers but then released them.

[Please demand that the authorities](#) ensure it is safe for people to assemble and express themselves freely and bring the perpetrators to account.

## KAZAKHSTAN

27-year old graphic designer **Akmaral Tobylova** is under house arrest for reading an opposition website. Since 13 March, when a court in the capital declared the opposition party an extremist organization, the police have threatened bloggers, activists and members of the public across Kazakhstan with prosecution for supporting the political party, *Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan*, on social media. [Ask for the immediate release of Akmaral Tobylova](#), a prisoner of conscience, and others detained peacefully exercising their human rights.

## UZBEKISTAN

### Yusuf Ruzimuradov released after 19 years in jail



*Human Rights Watch* reports that journalist **Yusuf Ruzimuradov** has been released after 19 years in jail, the longest time that any journalist has been imprisoned anywhere in the world. He was jailed after working for the independent newspaper *Erk*, convicted along with his editor **Muhammad Bekjanov**. Both journalists were sentenced to 15 years in 1999 and both had their sentences arbitrarily extended for allegedly violating prison rules.

Unlike **Yusuf Ruzimuradov**, **Muhammad Bekjanov** was released February 2017 after being imprisoned for 17 years. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/03/02/uzbekistan-releases-journalist-after-19-years-prison>

Video on **Muhammad Bekjanov's** release:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=atSCZ\\_5Qxmw&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=atSCZ_5Qxmw&feature=youtu.be)

### Tortured journalist must be released NOW!

Since Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev assumed power in September 2016, he has taken some steps to improve the country's abysmal human rights record, such as releasing some political prisoners, relaxing certain restrictions on free

expression, removing citizens from the security services' notorious "black list," and increasing accountability of government institutions to the citizenry. Journalists, however are continually being harassed and prosecuted.

Amnesty released a public statement on 14 February demanding the immediate release of **Bobomurod Abdullaev**, detained on 27 September 2017 charged with "conspiracy to overthrow the constitutional regime". He has been tortured since his arrest and has had trouble getting legal representation.

[Call for an investigation onto the torture, and for his immediate release.](#)

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## OUR TEAM

If there is **anything you would like to ask** about Amnesty work and the human rights situation in any of the FSU countries, or if you would like any of us to come and **give a talk to your group**, let us know. Pick up the phone and give us a call, or send us an e-mail.

**The current FSU Country Coordinators team is:**

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