

Mr Islam Karimov
President of Uzbekistan
ul. Uzbekistanskaya 43
Rezidentsia prezidenta
700163 Tashkent
Republic of Uzbekistan

Brussels, 16 April 2012

Re: Concerns regarding the situation of lawyer, Mr Rukhiddin Kamilov

Your Excellency,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), which, through the national Bars and Law Societies of the Member States of the European Union and the European Economic Area, represents more than 1 million European lawyers. In addition to membership from the EU bars, it has also observer representatives from a further eleven European countries' bars.

The CCBE, through its Human Rights Committee, places great emphasis on respect for human rights and the rule of law. The CCBE is particularly concerned by the situation of human rights defenders in the world.

The CCBE writes to express its concerns over the situation of human rights defender and lawyer, Mr Rukhiddin Kamilov, who continues to be excluded from the bar.

The CCBE has been informed that on 28 February 2012, the Tashkent Regional Commission decided that, after the review of the qualifications of lawyers, it would continue to exclude Mr Kamilov from the bar.

Mr Kamilov, who has been active in defending civil and human rights activists, was first disbarred in May 2009 together with other Uzbek lawyers. Among his clients were Elena Urlaeva of Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan, Saidjahon Zainabidinov of the Andijan Human Rights Group, Mutabar Tadjibaeva of the Fiery Hearts Club and Dilmurod Sayid, human rights defender and journalist. Mr Kamilov has openly denounced threats against and blackmailing of his clients as well as the use of torture against them.

The CCBE believes that the refusal by the Tashkent Regional Commission to grant a licence to practise to Mr Kamilov is directly linked to his legitimate work in defence of human rights and, in particular, his provision of legal representation to human rights defenders in Uzbekistan.

The CCBE is concerned that the disbarment of lawyers and further refusals to issue new lawyers' licences is being used as a means of controlling and restricting the legal profession by the judiciary in Uzbekistan. This often results in the victims of human rights violations being left with no independent legal representation. This situation is especially worrying because judicial harassment remains one of the most efficient methods used against human rights activists in order to silence their dissenting voices.

In this context, the CCBE wishes to draw to your attention the following Articles of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (1990):

Article 16 states that:

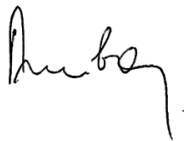
Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economics or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

Furthermore, Article 23 states that:

Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the rights to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights and to join or form local, national or international organisations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of their lawful action or their membership in a lawful organisation. In exercising these rights, lawyers shall always conduct themselves in accordance with the law and the recognised standards and ethics of the legal profession.

In view of the above, the CCBE urges you to take effective steps to ensure that the disbarment of Mr Kamilov and all other lawyers in similar circumstances in Uzbekistan is immediately and unconditionally overturned. The CCBE also urges you to guarantee in all circumstances that lawyers in Uzbekistan are able to conduct their professional duties without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, in order to preserve the independence and integrity of the administration of justice and ensure that all attempts to discredit lawyers for the legitimate exercise of their professional duties are promptly and effectively stopped.

Yours sincerely,



Marcella PRUNBAUER-GLASER

CCBE President