

13 June 2019

Uzbekistan: journalist Timur Karpov denied a passport for travelling abroad

On 13 June 2019, the journalist **Timur Karpov** was officially notified that the issuing of his passport was denied due to the request being considered 'unreasonable'. The journalist has been trying to obtain the passport that would allow him to travel outside of Uzbekistan since 8 April 2019.

Timur Karpov is a photographer and multimedia journalist documenting human rights violations in Uzbekistan. His research focuses among other things on forced labour in cotton fields. During his work on documenting the use of forced labour in the cotton fields in Uzbekistan, he has been detained, threatened and interrogated many times. Timur Karpov closely collaborates with a number of Uzbek human rights defenders and international human rights organisations.

On 13 June 2019, the head of the Migration and Citizenship Office of the Department of Internal Affairs Coordination in Yashnbadsky District, Tashkent, Uzbekistan issued an official note stating that Timur Karpov was denied a passport for travelling abroad due to the 'unreasonableness' of issuing it. The official made a reference to the Provision on the Procedure for the Citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan Travelling Abroad, according to which the right to travel abroad can be restricted in case an applicant deliberately provides false information about themselves. In practice that means that Timur Karpov's right to travel outside of Uzbekistan is curtailed. The journalist intends to submit a legal complaint against the refusal to issue him with a passport.

On 8 April 2019, Timur Karpov submitted all the required documents in order to obtain a passport for travelling abroad which takes 21 business days in accordance with the law. On 30 April 2019, as he was not notified on the status of the passport upon the end of this period, he came to the Passport Office where he was told that his application was still under consideration. On 10 May 2019, he received the same answer. Only on 11 June he was told that the issuing of the passport was declined.

According to Uzbek law, the citizens intending to go outside of the country must obtain a second passport for travelling abroad in addition to the one for internal use. The system of biometric passports for travelling abroad was introduced in Uzbekistan on 1 January 2019 substituting the outdated procedure of issuing permits for travelling outside of the country. The old procedure was often used by the authorities to restrict the freedom of movement of journalists and human rights defenders in order to prevent them from testifying about human rights violations in the country. The denial of the second passport's issue to Timur Karpov is the first registered case where the government is reportedly using the new system to prevent a journalist from travelling abroad and potentially speaking out about violations in the country before an international audience.

Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned by the decision of the law enforcement authorities of the Republic of Uzbekistan to deny the issue of the passport for travelling abroad to journalist Timur Karpov. This decision curtails the right of the reporter to leave the country and thus imposes a travel ban on him. Front Line Defenders believes that the restriction of Timur Karpov's right of movement came as a direct result of his peaceful and legitimate human rights work in protection of freedom of speech and labour rights.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Uzbekistan to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally remove all restrictions on the free movement of Timur Karpov and ensure the prompt issue of his passport for travelling abroad, as Front Line

Defenders believes this is due to the government's reluctance to have Timur Karpov share information about human rights violations in Uzbekistan with an international audience;

2. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Uzbekistan are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.

Front Line Defenders respectfully reminds you that the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998, recognises the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders, their right to freedom of association and to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals. We would particularly draw attention to Article 6 (b and c): *“Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others: (b) As provided for in human rights and other applicable international instruments, freely to publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and knowledge on all human rights and fundamental freedoms; (c) To study, discuss, form and hold opinions on the observance, both in law and in practice, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and, through these and other appropriate means, to draw public attention to those matters”*, and to Article 12 (1 and 2): *“(1) Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to participate in peaceful activities against violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. (2) The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration.”*

Please inform us of any actions that may be taken with regard to the above case.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Anderson
Executive Director

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