



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Muhammed Bekjanov's Appeal of Conviction

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 29, 2012

The United States expresses its disappointment at the decision by an appeals court in Uzbekistan on March 15 to uphold an additional five-year sentence imposed on political activist Muhammed Bekjanov. This new sentence had been imposed by a lower court only weeks before Mr. Bekjanov was due to be released after nearly 13 years in prison. The new charges against Mr. Bekjanov alleged that he had violated article 221 of the Criminal Code, "failure to obey the legal regulations of a penal institution."

We note that, according to his lawyers, Mr. Bekjanov served more than 12 years in prison without receiving any reprimands from prison authorities, but according to the charges against him, he allegedly violated internal prison rules four times in the course of four months as his sentence was coming to an end.

It is regrettable that Mr. Bekjanov did not benefit from the ongoing amnesty announced on December 5, 2011, in connection with the 20th anniversary of Uzbekistan's independence. In our statement in the Permanent Council on February 9, 2012, we called for Mr. Bekjanov's deserved inclusion in this amnesty.

We understand that the issue of Mr. Bekjanov's continued imprisonment will be subject to further judicial review. We urge the Government of Uzbekistan to ensure that the legal proceedings against Mr. Bekjanov are fair and that they are conducted in accordance with Uzbekistan's law and its OSCE commitments to the rule of law. We further urge the Government of Uzbekistan to conduct these proceedings with full transparency and to investigate all alleged irregularities.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman