

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

OFFICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

For Immediate Release

May 3, 2006

Attorney defending Jehovah's Witnesses is deported from Uzbekistan

On April 26, 2006, attorney Kirill Kulikov was detained on arrival at Tashkent airport. After 12 hours and with no explanation given, he was put on the first available flight back to Russia. In the deportation document that Kulikov was handed prior to his departure, it merely stated that he was being "denied entry into the Republic of Uzbekistan because entry has been barred." This was not the first trip to Uzbekistan for Kulikov. As on previous occasions, he was intending to act as legal representative for Bakhrom Pulatov and other Jehovah's Witnesses who have been subjected to prejudicial and unlawful treatment by state agencies for several years.

Bakhrom Pulatov, from the city of Karshi, was originally accused of "illegal religious activity," including possessing a Bible, reading it with fellow believers, praying, and discussing what he has learned from the Bible with others. On August 30, 2005, Pulatov was found guilty and fined approximately \$650 (U.S). On March 29, 2006, the Supreme Court of the Republic of Uzbekistan, having considered the supervisory appeal prepared by Kulikov, sent the case back to the Kashkadar Regional Criminal Court for re-examination.

On the evening of April 12, 2006, Uzbek Jehovah's Witnesses, along with their fellow believers around the globe, observed the most important event in their religious calendar—the Memorial of Christ's Death. Throughout Uzbekistan, state agencies carried out raids in order to break up the service. As a result, large numbers of Jehovah's Witnesses were arrested and subjected to administrative fines and other penalties. In Karshi, Bakhrom Pulatov was arrested again and taken to the police station where he reported being viciously beaten by police inspector Ishtimirov. Pulatov was left with injuries to his kidneys, a severe concussion and suspected brain hemorrhage. He remains hospitalized.

*The Administrative Center of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia
ul. Srednyaya, 6, pos. Solnechnoye, St. Petersburg 197739
tel.: (812) 434-38-50; fax: (812) 437-09-70*