

### Press Release

## **Can the Court of Appeal Correct the Uzbek Government's Wrong and Free the Oppressed?**

(Translated)

A few months ago, 23 former political prisoners were tried in Tashkent. It was found that 15 of them were classified as "extremely dangerous repeat offenders" and were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 7 to 14 years, to be served in a special regime detention center. The remaining eight were sentenced to house arrest for up to 5 years.

It is worth noting that these Shabab (men) who appeared before the court had already spent 20 years in prison, during which time they were subjected to various psychological and physical pressures. Their lawyers have appealed to the Court of Appeal to reconsider the case. Currently, 15 Shabab are in the appeal phase. According to available information, the presiding judge of the Court of Appeal is Kuchkarov Sinjar Kuchkarovich.

This case should be assessed primarily from two perspectives: Shari' and political. From a Shari' standpoint, the question arises: since when has calling people to the path of Allah become a crime? Yet, in a country like Uzbekistan, where prominent scholars like Bukhari and Tirmidhi once emerged, such strange and bewildering events occur today! Everyone knows that calling to Islam and living according to its teachings is an obligation upon every Muslim, and the essence of their life is based on this fundamental Islamic belief. Isn't it shameful for the current Uzbek government to put these young men on trial again, even though they were victims of the previous "corrupt regime," especially when the truth is so clear? Furthermore, using the term "extremely dangerous repeat offenders" regarding them is nothing but an exaggeration and fabrication. Tell us, did these individuals engage in corruption, bribery, or embezzle billions of dollars? Did they plunder the nation's wealth? Did they take a life? Did they deprive people of their rights? Did they betray the country and its people by serving foreign colonial powers like Russia and America? In the end, those who commit such grave acts that are forbidden by Allah often do not conceal their deeds, and many roam freely, yet no one has the courage to bring them to justice.

Incidentally, the court recently sentenced a man who called for the return of the former Soviet Union to only three years in prison. These true crimes receive light punishments, while those who call for Islam are met with extreme harshness and

intolerance! This policy of double standards reflects nothing but the Uzbek regime's bias against Islam and its intolerance towards Islamic Dawah.

From a political standpoint, there is no doubt that colonialist powers such as Russia are behind the Uzbek regime's persecution of oppressed Muslims. The laws and measures taken by the regime to eradicate Islamic Dawah in our country and distance our Muslim population from Islam are solely to appease these powers. However, this does not absolve the leaders of the government from responsibility, nor does it lighten their accountability before Allah. Since those in the government consider themselves Muslims, their efforts to please colonial powers, who are enemies of Islam and Muslims, and to align themselves with them, is considered a betrayal of Allah, His Messenger, and the Muslim community. Indeed, Allah has forbidden oppression and treachery.

We affirm that there is no threat to our people and our country from these young men or the Islamic call they carry. On the contrary, they are brave youths, ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of this Ummah and its people! They do not even see the Uzbek government, which commits these atrocities, as their enemy. The real enemies of us Muslims are the colonialist powers like America and Russia. So why do those in government not understand what these young men do? Do they not reflect on the state of the world today and recognize who is friend, who is foe, and where the true danger lies?

Therefore, we say to the Uzbek regime that it is not too late; it can correct its mistake by releasing these young men. Furthermore, it should also release the dozens of former political prisoners who have been taken from various prisons. The only right and proper path to salvation is for the regime to stop following the ways of the colonial powers, to return to Allah, and to engage in politics while holding firmly to His guidance. By doing so, perhaps they will find their faces illuminated in the presence of Allah and receive His mercy, for Allah the Almighty says: **﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مُحْسِنُونَ﴾** “Indeed, Allah is with those who fear Him and those who are doers of good.” [An-Nahl:128].

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in Uzbekistan**