

**109th CONGRESS, 1st Session- U.S. Senate RESOLUTION  
295**

109TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION **S. RES. 295**

Expressing the sense of the Senate on the arrest of Sanjar Umarov in  
Uzbekistan.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 2, 2005

Mr. LUGAR (for himself, Mr. FRIST, and Mr. MCCAIN) submitted the  
following resolution; which was considered and agreed to

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RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the Senate on the arrest of Sanjar Umarov in Uzbekistan.

Whereas the United States supports the development of democracy, free markets, and civil  
society in Uzbekistan and in other states in Central Asia;

Whereas the rule of law, the impartial application of the law, and equal justice for all courts of  
law are pillars of all democratic societies;

Whereas Sanjar Umarov was reportedly arrested in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on October 22, 2005;

Whereas Sanjar Umarov is a businessman and leader of the Uzbek opposition party, Sunshine Coalition;

Whereas Sanjar Umarov was reportedly taken into custody on October 22, 2005, during a crackdown on the Sunshine Coalition that included a raid of its offices and seizure of its records;

Whereas Sanjar Umarov was reportedly charged with grand larceny;

Whereas press accounts report that representatives of Sanjar Umarov claim that Mr. Umarov was drugged and abused while at his pretrial confinement center in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, but such accounts could not be immediately confirmed, and official information about the health, whereabouts, and treatment while in custody of Mr. Umarov has thus far been unavailable;

Whereas the United States has expressed its serious concern regarding the overall state of human rights in Uzbekistan and is seeking to clarify the facts of this case;

Whereas the European Union (EU) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) have expressed concern about the arrest and possible abuse of Sanjar Umarov; and

Whereas the Government of Uzbekistan is party to various treaty obligations, and in particular those under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which obligate governments to provide for due process in criminal cases: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That it is the sense of the Senate that—

(1) the law enforcement and judicial authorities of Uzbekistan should ensure that Sanjar Umarov is accorded the full measure of his rights under the Uzbekistan Constitution to defend himself against any and all charges that may be brought against him, in a fair and transparent process, so that individual justice may be done;

(2) the Government of Uzbekistan should observe its various treaty obligations, especially those under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which obligate governments to provide for due process in criminal cases; and

(3) the Government of Uzbekistan should publicly clarify the charges against Sanjar Umarov, his current condition, and his whereabouts.

SOURCE: [Bill Summary & Status for the 109th Congress](#)

**109th CONGRESS, 1st Session- House of Representatives**  
**RESOLUTION 545**

109TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

**H. RES. 545**

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives on the arrest of Sanjar Umarov in Uzbekistan.

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IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 10, 2005

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN (for herself, Mr. ACKERMAN, Mrs. BLACKBURN, and Mr. FORD) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on International Relations

H. RES. 545

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives on the arrest of Sanjar Umarov in Uzbekistan.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

November 10, 2005

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN (for herself, Mr. ACKERMAN, Mrs. BLACKBURN, and Mr. FORD) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on International Relations

RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives on the arrest of Sanjar Umarov in Uzbekistan.

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Whereas the rule of law, the impartial application of the law, and equal justice for all courts of law are pillars of all democratic societies;

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Whereas Sanjar Umarov is a businessman and leader of the Uzbek opposition party, Sunshine Coalition;

Whereas Sanjar Umarov was reportedly taken into custody on October 22, 2005, during a crackdown on the Sunshine Coalition that included a raid of its offices and seizure of its records;

Whereas Sanjar Umarov was reportedly charged with grand larceny;

Whereas press accounts report that representatives of Sanjar Umarov claim that Mr. Umarov was drugged and abused while at his pretrial confinement center in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, but such accounts could not be immediately confirmed, and official information about the health, whereabouts, and treatment while in custody of Mr. Umarov has thus far been unavailable;

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SOURCE: [The Congressional Record](#)



## HELSINKI COMMISSION NEWS

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UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON  
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

234 Ford House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515-6460  
Senator Sam Brownback, Chairman  
Rep. Christopher H. Smith, Co-Chairman  
**For Immediate Release**

[www.csce.gov](http://www.csce.gov)  
Media Contact: Sean Woo  
202.225.1901  
**March 7, 2006**

### HELSINKI COMMISSION CONDEMNS IMPRISONMENT OF UZBEK ACTIVISTS

**(Washington)** - Helsinki Commission Chairman Senator Sam Brownback [R-KS] sharply criticized the conviction of Uzbek opposition and human rights activists Nodira Hidoyatova and Sanjar Umarov. "With these latest arrests, President Karimov is clearly determined to isolate his country even farther," said Brownback. "I urge him to pull back from this misguided campaign, release these activists and seek a serious dialogue with Uzbek society before it is too late."

A criminal court in Tashkent on March 1 sentenced Hidoyatova to a 10-year prison term, accusing her of being part of a "criminal gang." Sanjar Umarov, head of the Sunshine Coalition, was found guilty on March 6 by a Tashkent criminal court of 'economic' crimes and given a 14 ½ year sentence. The verdict will be reportedly reduced by one fourth, in accordance with the amnesty issued by the Uzbek Senate in December 2005.

"President Islam Karimov has run a police state in Uzbekistan since the early 1990s, but since last May's massacre in Andijan, he has cracked down even harder, in an effort to completely stifle civil society," said Commission Co-Chairman Christopher H. Smith [R-NJ] "I urge Uzbek authorities to immediately and unconditionally release these moderate opposition activists."

The Sunshine Coalition emerged in 2005, calling for political and economic reforms. After Uzbek security forces shot hundreds of demonstrators in Andijan last May, the Coalition criticized the use of force and urged an open accounting of what happened.

Commission Ranking Member Benjamin Cardin [D-MD] criticized the sentencing. "Since Andijan, Uzbek authorities have forced many Western NGOs, such as Freedom House and the BBC, to cease their activities in Uzbekistan, and many Uzbek human rights activists have been jailed. The case of Nodira Hidoyatova and Sanjar Umarov is the latest example of the government's failure to respect its Helsinki commitments."

The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, also known as the Helsinki Commission, is a U.S. Government agency that monitors progress in the implementation of the provisions of the 1975 Helsinki Accords. The Commission consists of nine members from the United States Senate, nine from the House of Representatives, and one member each from the Departments of State, Defense and Commerce.

## **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union**

*June 21st, 2006*

The EU takes note of the opportunity to attend the appeal trials against Mr. Sanjar Umarov, Ms. Nadira Khidoyatova and Mutabar Tojibaeva.

The EU has learned of the sentences pronounced against Mr. Umarov whose sentence was reduced from 10 and a half to 7 years and 8 months and against Ms. Khidoyatova whose sentence was reduced to 7 years suspended with a 3 years probationary period and her immediate release in return for financial compensation to the State.

The EU has also observed with concern the confirmation of the conviction of Ms. Tojibaeva and regrets that the call on the legal authorities for humanitarian principles has not lead to an alleviation of her sentence.

Although in two cases the sentences have been reduced, the EU remains concerned that the convictions of the first instance have been confirmed in all three cases. The EU repeats its call on the Uzbek authorities to ensure access to the inmates and the required medical assistance.

Furthermore the EU urges the Uzbek authorities to inform about the whereabouts and current situation of the human rights defender Saidjakhon Zainabitdinov who has been arrested in January and his son Ilhom Zainabitdinov who has been detained on 22 May this year.

The EU calls on Uzbekistan to comply with all relevant international human rights standards and treaty obligations and OSCE commitments as regards the right to fair trial, freedom of expression and the protection of human rights defenders.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

## Statements in International Organisations

16.03.2006

### OSCE Permanent Council No. 598

#### **EU Statement in Response to the Head of the OSCE Centre in Tashkent, Ambassador Miroslav Jenča**

1. The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Jenča to the Permanent Council, and thanks him for his balanced and considered report. We express our full support for the Centre's activities, and wish Ambassador Jenča and his dedicated staff the best of success for all ongoing and future activities.
2. The EU attaches great value to keeping the political dialogue with Uzbekistan open and calls upon the Uzbek authorities to co-operate with the Chairman in Office and the Secretary General.
3. In the year that has passed since Ambassador Jenča's first report to the PC, the human rights situation and the process of democratic reform have deteriorated significantly in Uzbekistan. We remain deeply disturbed by the events in Andijan in May 2005, rightfully termed a tragedy. We repeat our call for an independent and transparent inquiry into all aspects of this tragic occurrence, and we offer our cooperation to the Uzbek side in this respect. We look forward to the publication of ODIHR's Report on the trials subsequent to the Andijan events.
4. Many affected by the Andijan tragedy have fled Uzbekistan and sought refuge in the territories of other participating States. Their fate, and the possibility of deportations or extraditions to their country of origin, remain a cause of great concern to the EU. Once again, we commend the efforts of all States that have granted protection to the refugees by offering asylum or temporary refuge. At the same time, we call on all participating States that currently shelter refugees from Uzbekistan to refrain from deportations and to work with the UNHCR and others in order to assure the continued safety and security of these individuals. And we call on the Uzbek authorities to allow access to and respect the rights of those already returned.
5. Regrettably, the possibility for independent national and international observers to follow the trials against those held responsible for the incidents in Andijan was limited to the first trial before the Supreme Court which ended on 14 November 2005. The lack of transparency in the subsequent trials is particularly deplorable as the Supreme Court trial clearly failed to meet international standards of due legal process. We express our hope that justice will be meted out eventually to all those who must be held accountable in this context.
6. At the same time, we appreciate the fact that trial observation was made possible in recent lawsuits against members of the civil society, including Ms. Khi-dayatova and Mr. Umarov from the "Sunshine Coalition" and Ms. Tojibaeva from the "Burning Hearts" group. However, we are deeply concerned that the

sentences passed against these individuals are indicative of the mounting pressure on non-governmental organizations, human rights defenders and civil society groups in Uzbekistan. Other moves against civil society, including the shutdown of several international NGO's during the past year, corroborate this picture. We call on the Uzbek side to reverse this trend and to allow, in conformity with OSCE principles and commitments, individual human rights de-fenders and non-governmental organizations to make their full contribution to the development of civil society and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Uzbekistan.

7. The EU takes note of the presidential decree of 1 August 2005 abolishing the death penalty from 2008, as well as some amendments to the legal system which will bring Uzbek legislation and – we hope – legal practice closer to international standards. On the other hand, we are concerned that the death penalty is still being imposed, and that prisoners are still on death row. We reiterate our view that an immediate moratorium on the death penalty would be the logical first step towards its forthcoming abolition, and we call on the Uzbek side to impose such a moratorium promptly. The vast majority of OSCE participating States have abolished death penalty. Of those that still have it in their legislation, most have introduced a moratorium.
8. Finally, while we welcome the sustained contacts of the Centre in Tashkent with the Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we deplore the fact that the scope of activities of the OSCE Centre in Tashkent was limited in a number of cases due to a lack of approval or co-operation from the Uzbek authorities. The non-accreditation of two newly recruited staff members has been an additional constraint on the Centre's work, as has been the exceptional limited duration of the Centre's mandate. These factors have made it difficult for the Centre to function efficiently. We express our expectation that the Centre will be able to resume its work on the basis of a regular twelve-month mandate, and will be able to carry out its full range of activities in all three dimensions, taking into account the inherent link between security and human rights. Consenting to this would be the clearest demonstration by the Uzbek side of its desire to further develop the mutually beneficial partnership with the OSCE.
9. In its reply to Ambassador Jenča's report in April 2005, the Uzbek delegation expressed its openness "to constructive dialogue on matters involving some criticism". The European Union wishes to underline its readiness to work with the Uzbek side in this spirit of constructive dialogue. Opportunities to resume the constructive dialogue abound. In this vein, the EU reiterates its invitation to Uzbekistan to participate in the Regional Dialogue meeting between the EU and Central Asian countries to be held on 7 April in Almaty. We hope for appropriate Uzbek participation. Once again, we thank Ambassador Jenča for his efforts to support Uzbekistan in the promotion of OSCE principles and commitments and wish him and the staff at the Centre the best of success.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, as well as the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

\*Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process

## **Reuters: EU concerned over Uzbek opposition jailings**

*March 10th, 2006*

TASHKENT, March 10 (Reuters) – The European Union has [voiced concern](#) over the jailing of opposition and human rights activists in Uzbekistan and urged the authoritarian Central Asian state to allow foreign observers to attend trials.

Earlier this month Uzbek courts sentenced Sanjar Umarov and Nodira Khidayatova, senior members of a moderate opposition group, and Mukhtabar Tojibayeva, a human rights defender, to 11, 10 and eight years in jail, respectively, for economic crimes.

The opposition says the cases were politically motivated. “The EU urges Uzbekistan to act in conformity with all relevant OSCE human dimension commitments, international human rights standards and treaty obligations in the case of appeals by the three persons convicted,” the EU’s rotating Austrian presidency said in a statement on its Web site, [www.eu2006.at](http://www.eu2006.at).

“The EU urges Uzbekistan to review the conviction of Ms. Tojibayeva and to ensure a fair trial with access for national and international observers.”

The three criticised Uzbek President Islam Karimov’s government over a bloody crackdown in the town of Andizhan in May last year when witnesses saw troops open fire on civilians.

Since the Andizhan events, Uzbekistan has jailed more than 180 people accused of involvement and put pressure on foreign-funded charities and the few independent media.

Most trials related to Andizhan have been closed to international observers and Western journalists.

Karimov, who says his opponents are “international terrorists” and is backed by Russia and China, has denied any ordinary members of the public were killed in Andizhan.

SOURCE: [Reuters](#)

## [The Washington Post: Uzbekistan Jails Opposition Leader and Rights Worker](#)

*March 7th, 2006*

*In Government Crackdown, Pro-Democracy Group Also Ordered to Close Office*

By Peter Finn  
Washington Post Foreign Service

MOSCOW, March 6—Courts in Uzbekistan sentenced an opposition leader and a human rights worker to long prison terms Monday and ordered Freedom House, a U.S.-based organization that promotes democracy, to close its office in the country.

Sanjar Umarov, leader of the Sunshine Uzbekistan coalition, a small opposition group, was sentenced to almost 11 years on charges of financial crimes. Umarov, 49, who is also a businessman, was arrested in October after he criticized President Islam Karimov and the bloody crackdown last May in the city of Andijan.

“Umarov is guilty of creating a criminal gang and committing dangerous crimes, like embezzling large sums of money, tax evasion, paying bribes and forgery,” presiding Judge Zokirjon Isayev said in imposing a sentence of 10 years and eight months, the Reuters news agency reported.

“Not one of these accusations has been proved,” said Vitaly Krasilovsky, Umarov’s attorney.

In the months since the Andijan violence, Karimov’s authoritarian government has intensified repressive measures against political opponents, human rights activists and independent journalists, as well as foreign foundations and news media.

At least two dozen Uzbek activists have been imprisoned or have fled into exile, and dozens more have been arrested or imprisoned for alleged involvement in the protests in the Central Asian country, a former Soviet republic.

Also sentenced Monday was a human rights worker who was arrested in October while preparing to leave for a human rights conference in Dublin.

Mukhtabar Tojibaeva, the head of a group called the Fiery Hearts Club, was sentenced to eight years. She had been accused of slander for criticizing the government and was arrested after she gave an interview to Radio Liberty in which she said, "We do not need a government that does not follow its own laws."

Apparently fearful of a popular uprising like those that brought down governments in Georgia in 2003 and Ukraine in 2004, the government has been targeting foreign organizations that support local advocacy groups.

"Uzbek civil society is on the verge of annihilation," said Rachel Denber of Human Rights Watch, a New York-based advocacy group, which maintains an office in Uzbekistan. "This is a whole trajectory of repression that since the Andijan massacre is intended to silence any and all criticism of the Uzbek government."

Human rights groups say government troops killed hundreds of unarmed civilians in Andijan after a day of protests that were driven largely by anger over poverty and government repression. The protests began when armed men freed 23 prominent businessmen from a local prison early on May 13; the men were on trial for alleged membership in a banned Islamic group.

The government says 187 people were killed, most of whom it called Islamic terrorists.

Also Monday, a court ordered the office of Freedom House liquidated. Among other allegations, Freedom House was charged with illegally providing Internet access to human rights activists in violation of the charter governing its work in the country.

Jennifer Windsor, the group's executive director, called Monday's developments "just the latest in a series of actions trying to strangle any kind of civic action" in Uzbekistan.

The Eurasia Foundation, another U.S. organization, announced Monday that it was closing its office in Uzbekistan rather than wait for what it considers a preordained court decision against it.

Umarov's family members, who live in the United States, fear that he has been tortured while in prison. After a visit to Umarov in prison last year, his attorney said Umarov was naked and delirious.

SOURCE: [The Washington Post](#)

## **Human Rights Watch: Rights Defender Sentenced in “Puppet Theater”**

*March 7th, 2006*

### **Forced Closures of Freedom House, Eurasia Foundation Bode Ill for Civil Society**

(Tashkent, March 7, 2006) – The criminal process that led to the conviction of Uzbek human rights defender Mukhtabar Tojibaeva violated international fair trial standards, and the conviction should ultimately be set aside, Human Rights Watch said today. Tojibaeva, a prominent human rights defender in Uzbekistan and a vocal critic of the May 2005 Andijan massacre, was sentenced to eight years in prison on March 6.

“The trial that led to the sentence of Tojibaeva is so unsound that her conviction cannot be allowed to stand,” said Holly Cartner, Europe and Central Asia director at Human Rights Watch. “The Uzbek authorities should release Tojibaeva immediately, pending a review of the conviction.”

Human Rights Watch also expressed strong concern over this week’s sentencing of an Uzbek opposition leader and the forced closure of two international nongovernmental organizations that had worked to promote civil society in Uzbekistan.

The charges brought against Tojibaeva included slander, extortion, misuse of land, and other non-political charges which stem from a dispute she had with an employee of a fish farm she owns. However, she was also found guilty of membership of an illegal organization (Article 244 of the Uzbek criminal code) on the grounds that her organization, Burning Hearts, a human rights group based in Margilan, is unregistered under Uzbek law.

“We view Tojibaeva’s conviction as part of a pattern of persecution against independent voices and critics within civil society since the Andijan massacre,” said Cartner. “The ferocity of this pattern is unprecedented, even when judged against Uzbekistan’s 14-year history of repression since independence from the Soviet Union.”

On December 2, 2005, the Uzbek authorities declared an amnesty applicable to certain categories of prisoners and detainees. However, in reading the verdict, Judge Abdulaziz Yuldashev explicitly stated that the amnesty could not apply to Tojibaeva as she was a member of an “unregistered” organization. In recent years the offence under Article 244 has more generally been used against those suspected of membership of banned religious organizations, though it has occasionally been used to target human rights defenders for working for “unregistered” human rights organizations.

Human Rights Watch has documented how Uzbek authorities have routinely refused to register independent human rights organizations on the basis of minor technical flaws or other spurious reasons. Unregistered organizations that continue to operate are de facto in violation of the law and extremely vulnerable to government harassment, as are those who work with them.

In court yesterday, Tojibaeva remained defiant. **“I do not regret my activities and I will continue them regardless of the verdict,”** she said. Following the verdict and sentence today, before trial observers and her relatives, Tojibaeva shouted to the judge that, “This is puppet theater, and a tragedy.”

### **Background on Tojibaeva’s case**

Human Rights Watch said that Tojibaeva was denied the opportunity to prepare and present an adequate defense to the charges brought against her. She did not have adequate time to read the 5,000 pages of case materials, and her lawyer did not have adequate time or opportunity to discuss the materials with her. Tojibaeva was denied the right to consult in private with her lawyer during the investigation and at trial. The defense could not question several state witnesses because they were not asked to appear in court. The court also sent home several defense witnesses before they had a chance to testify.

Tojibaeva had been a vocal critic of the Uzbek government and has spoken openly about the massacre in Andijan in May 2005. In September 2005, she gave an interview to Radio Liberty’s Uzbek service, Ozodlik, in which she discussed mounting pressure against members of Burning Hearts. She also stated her belief that, following Andijan, local authorities had been given orders to silence all independent human rights defenders and political activists. “We do not need a government that does not follow its own laws,” she said in the interview. She was detained for two days following the Andijan massacre.

Tojibaeva was arrested on October 7, 2005 while preparing to leave for a human rights conference in Dublin, Ireland.

### **Defenders convicted and international NGOs shuttered**

Human Rights Watch said that Tojibaeva is the ninth human rights defender to be convicted in 2006. On January 5, a court handed down a 7-year sentence against Saidjahon Zainabidinov, a human rights defender from Andijan who was a key source of information to the outside world during the Andijan events and also a vocal critic of the massacre.

On January 11, five members of the human rights organization Ezgulik (Goodness) were convicted on a variety of charges; four were released on parole and one received a 5-year sentence. Two other Ezgulik members were convicted in January.

In other developments, today also saw a court order the closure of Freedom House, a U.S. government-funded human rights organization. The Eurasia Foundation, another U.S.-funded group, announced it was closing following charges that it had registered improperly and had held unauthorized workshops.

Also, yesterday the Tashkent City Court sentenced the leader of the opposition group “Sunshine Coalition of Uzbekistan,” **Sanjar Umarov**, to 14 years in prison. Last week, **Nodira Khidoiatova**, coalition’s coordinator, was sentenced to 10 years. Both were charged with extortion, plunder, embezzlement and theft.

**“With the verdicts against Tojibaeva and others, and the closure of NGOs, the verdicts against the Sunshine Coalition appear aimed at silencing entirely Uzbekistan’s opposition.”**

SOURCE: [Human Rights Watch](#)

November 2, 2005

## Senators Concerned on Uzbekistan Party Leader

By [C. J. CHIVERS](#)

MOSCOW, Nov. 1 - Echoing international concern about the arrest and suspected abuse of an opposition leader in [Uzbekistan](#), two American senators introduced a resolution on Tuesday calling on the Uzbek government to ensure that the detained politician is treated fairly and in accordance with his human rights.

The resolution, introduced by Senator [Bill Frist](#), the majority leader, and Senator Richard G. Lugar, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, was the first strong public sign of American concern about the treatment of the Uzbek opposition leader, Sanjar Umarov, who was arrested in Tashkent, the Uzbek capital, on Oct 22.

Mr. Umarov, 49, a wealthy businessman who is accused of embezzlement and tax evasion, has been seen by his lawyer only once since his arrest, and was naked and uncommunicative in his cell, the lawyer said. Mr. Umarov's family has said it fears he has been tortured and drugged.

As chairman of the Sunshine Uzbekistan coalition, Mr. Umarov had been campaigning for social and economic changes in the repressive Central Asian state.

His activities presented a rare public challenge to President Islam A. Karimov, who has been accused of ordering a bloody crackdown after a prison break and an antigovernment

demonstration in May in Andijon. Survivors say hundreds of people, most of them unarmed, were killed.

The crackdown, and Uzbekistan's refusal to investigate it credibly, was met with international condemnation and sanctions by the European Union. Uzbek relations with the United States have soured, and the government of Mr. Karimov has ordered the Pentagon to vacate a military airfield it has used since 2001, effective in 2006.

The fate of Mr. Umarov was first hinted at in a Soviet-style denunciation published in a newspaper on Aug. 4. An article called him "a sly werewolf" and portrayed him as a cunning and greedy businessman.

"He worked with one goal in mind: personal enrichment, even if it meant violating the law," the article read. "As much as he tries, there's only going to be one ending. Falling from such height will be painful."

Mr. Umarov sued the paper for defamation. He was arrested before the case was fully heard.



Uzbekistan jails opposition chief

By Ian MacWilliam

BBC Central Asia correspondent

**A court in Uzbekistan has sentenced another opposition leader to more than 10 years in prison.**

Sanjar Umarov, head of the Sunshine Uzbekistan Opposition Alliance, was convicted of alleged economic crimes.

He was arrested shortly after calling on members of parliament to discuss economic reform.

Critics say Mr Umarov is the latest victim of the Uzbek government's determination to quash all criticism and political dissent.

A court in the Uzbek capital, Tashkent, sentenced Sanjar Umarov to a total of 14 years in prison, but said the sentence should be reduced to just over 10 years under an amnesty agreement.

Umarov was also ordered to pay more than \$8m in fines.

He was found guilty of heading a criminal group laundering money through offshore companies, tax avoidance and hiding foreign currency.

He declared that he was innocent of all the charges.

**US link**

A spokeswoman for Sunshine Uzbekistan said that Mr Umarov has had no business interests in Uzbekistan since 1996 and that the charges against him were fabricated.

She said the group intend to contest the case in the United States, as the charges relate to an Uzbek American company with which Mr Umarov was formerly involved.

The charges were similar to those brought against another leader of the opposition group, Nadira Khidoyatova, who was also sentenced to 10 years in prison last week.

Sunshine Uzbekistan came to prominence last year after Uzbek troops crushed a large anti-government protest in the eastern town of Andijan by firing into the crowds.

Eyewitnesses say hundreds of people were killed, but the government insists the protest was an attempt to start an Islamic uprising.

It has refused repeated international calls for an independent investigation.

Story from BBC NEWS:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/asia-pacific/4778526.stm>

Published: 2006/03/06 11:27:41 GMT

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