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**17 September 2010**

**To:**

H.E. Islam Abduganievich Karimov  
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**CC:**

H.E. Vladimir Norov, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Your Excellency,

I write as the Secretary General of CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, an international alliance of civil society with members and partners in over a hundred countries. Together with the undersigned partners, we express our deep concern about the indictment of Adbumalil Bobev, an independent journalist and correspondent for the Voice of America, in what appears to be another case of attack and suppression of independent thought and expression in the country.

Mr. Boboev was officially charged under four articles of the Criminal Code – ‘Slander’ (Art. 139), ‘Insult’ (Art. 140), ‘Illegal Departure abroad or illegal entry into the Republic of Uzbekistan’ ( Art. 223), and ‘manufacture or distribution of materials containing a threat to public safety and order’ (Art. 244.1). Article 244.1 also assumes that the crime was committed “with the use of financial or other material assistance received from religious organisations as well as from foreign states, organisations and citizens,” which we believe implies the radio service, Voice of America, funded by the US government.

According to local sources, Boboev was initially charged with Article 233 alleged to have entered the country without a stamp on his passport upon his return from Kazakhstan. The other charges appear to be based on the expert conclusion of the “Center for mass communications monitoring”, a body under the Uzbek Agency for Communication and Information. We believe that these charges were brought against Mr. Boboev due to his independent journalism work for Voice of America. 41 year old Abdumalik Boboev has been working for Voice of America since 2006 but was never able to obtain official accreditation for his work due to lack of response from the Uzbek Foreign Ministry to his several applications for registration.

Your Excellency, we are alarmed that such ideologically motivated charges are repeatedly used by your Government to suppress independent thought and expression. In the past year, we have witnessed the trial and conviction of several individuals for exercising their fundamental right to freedom of expression. In February, photographer Umida Akhmedova, was found guilty of “libel” and “insult” for her photographic and cinematographic work documenting the lives and culture of the Uzbek people. Although she was granted amnesty, it sent a strong negative signal to the artistic community of Uzbekistan, as well as national and international civil society at large. Health practitioner Maksim Popov was also found guilty in September 2009 of charges, including “promoting homosexuality” and “involving minors in anti-social behavior.” Mr. Popov is still serving his 4 year sentence as punishment for his work to raise public

awareness on the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and the promotion of healthy lifestyles. We are also aware that Vladimir Berezovskiy, a Russian journalist and the editor of Vesti.uz website, is currently on trial under charges of 'insult' and 'slander' after expert findings of the national Center for Mass Communications monitoring.

Freedom of Expression is a right that is expressly guaranteed under the constitution of Uzbekistan, and under its commitments to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. International human rights law is anchored on the principle that human rights are of universal significance, inherent in humanity and belonging to everyone irrespective of political, cultural or any other contexts. Such rights like freedom of expression are one of the fundamental rights that can not be subjected to limitations except for limited prescribed grounds and only under the strictest of conditions. We remain deeply concerned that a possible guilty verdict in this specific case could ultimately fail to meet this test.

We call upon you to use your Executive power to dismiss the charges against Abdumalik Boboev, ensure that freedom of expression is protected in your country, and support the good and peaceful work of civil society in your country.

Sincerely,



SECRETARY GENERAL

Ingrid Srinath  
Secretary General  
CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation

**Joined by:**

Bahadir Namazov, Committee for the Release of Prisoners of Conscience, Uzbekistan

Christian Hamel, Vice-president of the Association "Human Rights in Central Asia", France

Olga Zakharova, Ethno-Ecological Research Laboratory, Russian Federation

Mutabar Tadjibayeva – head of the «Fiery Hearts Club», France

Abdujalil Boymatov, President of Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan.

Talib Yakubov, the vice-president of the Human Rights Society Uzbekistan. France

Yusuf Rasulov, editor of the web site: [www.yangidunyo.com](http://www.yangidunyo.com), independent journalist. Sweden.

Tulkin Karaev, Member of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan, Timra, Sweden,

Gulshan Karaeva, Chairman Kashkadarya regional office Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan, Karshi, Uzbekistan,

Bashorat Eshova, Coordinator of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan in Switzerland,

Hamdambek Davletov, Member of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan, Timra, Sweden,

Muhiddin Kurbanov, Chairman of the International Society of Human Rights, Sweden

Avaz Fayazov, chairman of Caucasian branch, International Society of Human Rights

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