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Uzbekistan: Ruslan Sharipov Granted Asylum in the United States (<https://www.outrightinternational.org/content/uzbekistan-ruslan-sharipov-granted-asylum-united-states>)

Ruslan Sharipov, an independent journalist and human rights activist from Uzbekistan has been granted political refugee status in the United States. We celebrate this victory with him.

In a statement to IGLHRC, Ruslan Sharipov writes:

I was told that if I didn't leave Uzbekistan I would either be killed in Bukhara or sent back to Tovaksay prison. Thus on June 25, 2004 I had to leave Uzbekistan. I fled to Moscow on June 28, 2004 where I spent several months. I was given asylum by the United States and an International Red Cross passport which allowed me to travel to the United States on October 21st, 2004.

I am currently living with my family in California and would like to express my gratitude to IGLHRC, Human Rights Watch, the Committee to Protect Journalists, Reporters Without Borders, the World Association of Newspapers, PEN and so many other organizations who offered me support during this time and played key role in ensuring that I am finally free and safe.

Background Information:

On August 13, 2003, Mr. Sharipov was convicted on sodomy charges on the basis of a confession and apology signed under duress. Mr. Sharipov never denied his sexual orientation, but believed he had been singled out for persecution and charged with fabricated crimes (sex with a minor and coercion of a minor to "antisocial behavior") as a result of his public criticism of the Uzbek police and government.

He was sentenced to five and a half years in prison, but this sentence was later reduced to three years. During his time in Tovaksay Prison in Tashkent Region, Mr. Sharipov was subjected to cruel mental and physical torture. On March 13, 2004 Mr. Sharipov was moved from Tovaksay prison to serve the remainder of his term under house arrest. However, in June 2004, despite a statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs calling for a review of Mr. Sharipov's case and his possible release, the District Court of Tashkent decided to send Mr. Sharipov to the city of Bukhara, 600 km from the capital, for the continuation of his sentence. Mr. Sharipov was to be transferred to Bukhara on June 25, 2004. Instead, he fled Uzbekistan for Moscow, where he stayed until U.S. officials processed his application for refugee status.

IGLHRC will continue to maintain close contact with Ruslan Sharipov and will keep our Emergency Response Network (ERN) updated on the circumstances of his refugee status. IGLHRC thanks the subscribers to our ERN for their continued support of Ruslan Sharipov over the past two years and for their letters to Uzbek officials demanding Mr. Sharipov's release.

If you would like to write letter of support or congratulations to Ruslan Sharipov, he can be contacted via email at: ruslansharipov_hrsu@yahoo.com (mailto:ruslansharipov_hrsu@yahoo.com)

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