



*ABDUMANNOB POLAT,
Independent consultant, Washington, USA*

What Happened in Andijan?

The road to Andijan's bloody confrontation began in the summer of 2004 when Uzbek security forces arrested 23 young men in Andijan, many of who were senior employees or directors of successful local businesses. Authorities charged them with organizing an illegal religious extremist group, "Akramiya," and subverting the constitutional order.([i]) In the light of conditions in Uzbekistan it is quite possible that the accused men were innocent. Local authorities may have decided to take over their successful businesses.

According to some fairly credible reports, these businessmen had close ties to previous governor of the province and his associates. New local authorities may have had cynically used the ongoing government campaign of suppressing Islamists as an excuse for co-opting the enterprises. Such practices are not uncommon in Uzbekistan and many other former Soviet countries.

It is equally possible that the government may have tried to prevent the group from becoming too wealthy and independent of state control. Authorities were alarmed that the accused were devout Muslims and were treating both their employees and the local poor according to Islamic tradition. It is also possible that the Uzbek government's assertions that the arrested men were participating in or funding extremist groups were correct. The Akramiya trials began in Andijan in February 2005.

Each day that the court was in session relatives and employees of the accused men gathered across the street from the court for organized silent protests, sitting quietly to show solidarity with the defendants.([ii]) In Uzbekistan, such protests by relatives of those arrested and arraigned on charges of being Islamic extremists are not uncommon, but they usually last only two-three days and attract few demonstrators. One of the reasons why the Andijan protesters were outside the court was the fact that authorities, legitimately claiming limited space, only permitted two relatives of all the 23 defendants to attend the court sessions.

The following month, the number of protestors began to swell after events in neighboring Kyrgyzstan toppled President Askar Akayev. The "colored" revolutions in 2003-2005 in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan convinced Karimov and Uzbekistan's ruling elite that rapid democratization could threaten their rule. As stated earlier, Andijan is only a few dozen miles from Kyrgyzstan's portion of the Ferghana valley with its significant Uzbek minority, where the unrest began that roiled Bishkek and eventually forced Akayev to flee to Moscow.

The Tajik revolution in 1991-92 and the following civil war were the first alarm bell for Tashkent. The next and particular warning for Karimov came with the Tbilisi's "rose" revolution in November 2003: President Eduard Shevardnadze, Georgia's Minister of Internal Affairs before 1972 and then Georgian leader to 1985, had enjoyed extensive favorable Western publicity as Gorbachev's Foreign Minister in reducing Cold War tensions between the US-led West and Soviet Union. Shevardnadze's favorable image had allowed him to establish a much closer working relationship with Washington and other Western capitals, particularly Berlin, than Karimov. If Shevardnadze could be ousted with the Western support, what were America and Europe's true intentions towards the rest of the "post-Soviet" space? Tashkent's next wake-up call was November 2004 "orange" revolution in Ukraine, which brought Viktor Yushchenko's victory over Moscow's preferred candidate Viktor Yanukovich. In both revolutions, the West helped to finance and train opposition groups. Both new leaders were regarded as overtly pro-American and pro-European.

While Uzbekistan in independence era had earlier experienced some demonstrations and even riots brought about by post-Soviet declining social-economic conditions, the Andijan protests were much more notable because for the first time in the history of the country, the demonstrations continued for nearly three months. By May 11, 2005 the number of protestors had grown considerably. Sources of all political persuasions were in broad agreement that at the time both the protesters and regional Uzbek government officials continued to behave peaceably. Igor Rotar is a well-respected Russian journalist and expert on Central Asia, who has traveled extensively across and reported from the region since 1991. Rotar, who then had lived

in Central Asia and reported on the region for www.Forum18.org and www.Jamestown.org (the Jamestown Foundation), wrote, "As far as Forum 18 could ascertain from speaking between 31 May and 7 June to eyewitnesses in Andijan and refugees in Kyrgyzstan, virtually all those gathered on the square were employees of the detained businessmen. Interestingly, the businessmen had promised to pay staff, who attended the meeting as if it were a working day. Moreover, Forum 18 established that the businessmen's relatives had organized transport to bring those unhappy with Karimov's regime from outlying areas."([iii])

Protesters - "We are ready for any actions in order to free our innocent brothers"

Although the crowds around the court were peaceful and orderly as the proceedings neared their end on May 11, 2005 supporters of the accused reportedly warned that they would not take a guilty verdict lying down.([iv]) According to reports from sources sympathetic to the defendants and critical of the government, the relatives of those on trial were preparing for more decisive action. "We are ready for any actions in order to free our innocent brothers," said Husanboy Shokirov, brother of one of the defendants.([v]) It was reported from the court that one of the accused, Tursun Nazarov, said, "If we are sentenced, our families will not just sit twiddling their thumbs."([vi]) A supporter of the defendants said presciently, "If the sentence is unjust, we will be forced to act. We are now waiting," adding, "We are not a mob; we're intelligent people, so we are awaiting the sentence."([vii]) Despite intermittent media reports of the demonstrators' threats prior to the tragic events in Andijan in May 2005, the author of this study has been unable to find any mention of these purported threats in the huge volume of policy and advocacy papers and commentaries he perused that were published in the immediate aftermath of events in Andijan and later.

Patience was overtaken by events, however as an armed insurrection broke out before the final verdicts were issued.

According to local human rights activist Saidjahon Zaynobotdinov, prosecutors requested that a judge free three of the defendants and proposed relatively minor jail terms for other accused.([viii]) Prosecutors recommended that those found guilty receive sentences of three to seven years, far lighter than the usual verdicts handed down in previous similar trials.([ix]) Andijan province Deputy Attorney General Mirzo-Ulughbek Zokirov, representing the prosecution, requested that the presiding judge dismiss the most serious charge against the defendants of attempting to subvert the constitutional order, as it had not been proven during the trial.([x])

It is probable that the authorities became increasingly frightened both by the rising scale of protests and the protest leaders' warnings and threats about taking more concrete action if the defendants were found guilty and jailed. In any case, the prosecution requested relatively light sentences ([xi]) and the judge was planning even briefer periods of incarceration.([xii]) It also seems apparent that the government began taking precautionary and preemptive measures against protest organizers and arrested some of them.([xiii])

Many critics of the Uzbek government reported that the alleged arrests of some of the protesters were the primary reason that the demonstrations turned violent.([xiv])

It seems evident that the news or rumors - regardless whether it was true or not - about the arrest of demonstrators on May 12, 2005 may have hastened the beginning of the uprising. The theory that uprising was a spontaneous response to the May 12 arrests is too weak, however. It was clearly impossible to organize such a massive military operation as occurred on that night of May 12-13 in a few short hours following the purported arrest of demonstrators. Such a large-scale uprising as the one that occurred in Andijan would require many days, if not weeks, of preparation.

Forcing authorities to release several, if not most of the defendants and seeing the remainder given much milder sentences in comparison to similar cases in the country, could have been a major success for the Andijan demonstrators. In retrospect, it seems that extremists probably miscalculated their level of popular support and thus decided that it was time for an armed military insurgency as the prelude to triggering a broader people's revolution.

Two overlooked factors are essential to understanding the armed confrontation in Andijan. The first is the threats about more aggressive action made by some so far nonviolent demonstrators if their demands were not met. The second factor is the government dismissing a number of the

more serious charges against the defendants and planning to issue greatly reduced sentences to those found guilty, possibly even releasing the majority of the defendants as innocent on unproven charges, or more likely, subsequently amnestying those who might then receive relatively minor prison sentences, or sentencing them to jail terms equal to time already served by them since their initial detention in 2004. Such examples of juridical ruling are not uncommon in Uzbekistan. Professor Bakhtiyor Bobojonov, an Uzbek semi-independent expert on Islamic movements in Uzbekistan with a reputation for academic integrity, who works for the Uzbek Academy of Sciences, stated that months after the Andijan tragedy he was shown the judge's prepared ruling on the 23 defendants. According to Bobojonov, the court verdict that he reviewed stipulated the release of several defendants and handed down less severe sentences for the remainder of the accused than those requested by prosecution.[xv]

Despite the importance in retrospect of these two factors, most experts, reporters, analysts, journalists, human rights advocates, lobbyists, and others who wrote about the Andijan tragedy in its immediate aftermath, and even later, initially largely overlooked these elements. To the best knowledge of the author, even such pragmatic experts as Dr. Shirin Akiner, Dr. John C. K. Daly and Dr. S. Frederick Starr overlooked these two factors. Some human rights lobbyists continue to maintain however that armed insurgency was "in response" to alleged May 12, 2005 arrests of demonstrators.([xvi]) It should be noted again that the scope of the insurgents' military operation during the night of May 12 makes it most unlikely that it was spontaneously prepared in a few short hours.

After deciding some time during the evening of May 12, 2005 to proceed with their military operation, a group of armed men began by first attacking a police station and then a military barracks, killing a dozen government personnel and, according to a number of contemporary accounts, seizing up to a hundred submachine guns along with significant amounts of ammunition. Later, though some reports have contradictory timelines, the insurgents then attacked Andijan's prison, the highest security jail in the country, and released about 500 inmates. The 23 defendants were among those liberated from their cells, along with apparent religious and political prisoners, common criminals, murder suspects and convicted murderers.([xvii]) The independent, opposition-minded website www.fergana.ru reported that one of the freed inmates, serving a lengthy prison sentence after being convicted of several murders, escaped and committed another murder before being recaptured.([xviii])

The dramatic breakout buoyed the insurgents' spirits and set the scene for radicalizing an opposition rally planned for the next day.([xix]) Young people who joined the May 13, 2005 protest formed an informal militia policing the roads into the city center within a three-mile radius of downtown.([xx])

Unarmed Protesters Join the Revolution

The Institute for War and Peace Reporting wrote, "Andijan residents were drawn to the scene, some out of curiosity but others to lend their support."([xxi]) It seems very unlikely however that any significant percentage of the demonstrators came to the square merely "out of curiosity." First, most of the people in Andijan and the surrounding areas had heard about the exchange of gunfire and the fighting between rebels and government forces the previous night. It is also highly unlikely that people who crowded into the square did not see that gunmen had already seized the hokimiyat, the regional governor's headquarters.

During the demonstration in Andijan's central Bobur Square, the insurgents' first demand was the immediate release of Akramiya founder Akrom Yoldosh (Yuldosh) from a detention center in Tashkent, the capital, where he had been incarcerated after being convicted in 1999 charged with his alleged role in organizing the February terrorist bombings in Tashkent.([xxii])

Hostages and Human Shields

The insurgents also seized hostages. According to eyewitnesses interviewed by Rotar, "Akramiya members who had acquired weapons did not prevent free movement out of the square by those gathered there, but their attitude to the hostages did not meet international standards for the treatment of prisoners of war. Forum 18 learnt that several hostages received severe beatings. The hostages had wire tied round their necks and were placed at the perimeter of the square as human shields. Therefore the first to die from the shots fired by Uzbek government forces were the hostages".([xxiii])

Many eyewitnesses confirm that the rioters took about thirty hostages, which included members of the police, SNB (National Security Service) officers, government officials, and others who the rebels considered as "provocateurs," to serve as human shields ([xxiv]). Most of these eyewitnesses clearly sympathized with rebels. The scene swiftly turned bloody, as city prosecutor Ghanijan Abdurahimov was beaten to death by the crowd.([xxv]) Insurgents used both hostages and volunteers - women with children - among the demonstrators as human shields. In retrospect it seems unlikely that the bulk of the volunteers realized the danger they were putting themselves in even as the rebel leaders should have considered the peril that they were placing unarmed people in.

Some reports suggest that the hostages included some of the prisoners earlier liberated from the local jail, along with several human rights defenders who tried to mediate an end to the crisis.([xxvi]) Further details come from local human rights activist Qodirjon Ergashev, who visited the government administrative offices seized by the protesters.([xxvii]) Ergashev counted about 50 men between 20 and 40 years old inside and outside the building, all armed with Kalashnikov automatic rifles. Inside the building, Ergashev saw several policemen and government officials tied up, noting, "Some armed men were preparing Molotov cocktails, and some were beating the hell out of police and security officers they had captured."

Ergashev was subsequently taken to meet the uprising's leader, Sharifjon Shokirov, whose elder brother was one of the 23 defendants. Ergashev told Shokirov that his actions forfeited the goodwill of the global community, saying, "The entire world community was on your side. You were supported everywhere, and now I saw dead bodies outside this building." According to Ergashev, Shokirov replied that there was no alternative but armed resistance. Ergashev then tried to leave, but was instead taken prisoner. Later, as government forces closed in on the square packed with demonstrators, Ergashev along with about 30 other hostages was tied together at the head of a huge column of demonstrators moving out of the center of town. "Hostages first, then unarmed civilians, then armed men. Only four hostages survived after an armored personnel carrier opened fire on the crowd," Ergashev said.([xxviii]) While held hostage, Ergashev was beaten and received wounds to his shoulder.([xxix]) Another human rights activist in Andijan, Ortiqali Rahmatov, Ergashev's deputy and colleague, who tried to mediate with rebels, reportedly was shot and killed by insurgents.([xxx])

According to IWPR reports, during the day of May 13, 2005 the streets surrounding the square filled with men, some carrying guns. Their numbers were soon swelled by hundreds of others calling for jobs, fair wages and reasonable prices for goods, services and utilities, along with demands for justice and freedom. Some criticized Karimov and his government and demanded their resignation. The majority of those now flooding Andijan's streets apparently sympathized with the rebels.

The Uzbek Government Reacts

The government's determined reaction to such provocation became predictable and inevitable. Some rebels with a dawning sense of realism told reporters that they understood that the government would not compromise with them after what they did.([xxxi]) After fruitless phone talks between then Uzbek Minister of Internal Affairs Zokir Almatov and rebel leader Qobiljon Parpiev, government troops moved in and killed a hundred or more armed insurgents and many more unarmed sympathizers.([xxxii])

Karimov himself flew to Andijan that morning. Though phone talks with rebel leader were conducted by his Minister of Internal Affairs, Karimov personally handled the situation, as he did in December 1991 in Namangan and in one hour after the February 1999 car bombings in Tashkent.

Some sources critical of Karimov claimed that the government troops opened fire first without warning on the crowd of protesters and armed insurgents, while other sources reported that the gunmen opened fire first, forcing the troops to respond in kind to end the rebellion. Eyewitness accounts are not reliable, as they are heavily influenced by their sympathies and interests, as well as where they were during the final confrontation.

Western, Russian and some regional journalists noted with growing alarm that the violence subsequently appeared to be spreading to neighboring towns, raising fears that the volatile Central Asian state could erupt in full-scale revolution.([xxxiii]) Analysts commented that Uzbekistan's marginal, weak and divided opposition with secular-democratic slogans could be

swiftly overtaken by rapidly developing events, and that such a revolution could slide into chaos or anarchy, overthrowing the Karimov government and bringing a radical Islamic or nationalist regime to power.

The final death toll of unarmed protesters killed by government troops remains unknown. A number of independent experts enjoying "good relations" with Tashkent corroborate the Uzbek government's claim that about 200 people in all had been killed, among them government officials, armed rebels, hostages and unarmed demonstrators. Anti-Karimov elements claim that the actual death toll is far higher, with estimates ranging from a low of about 500 to more than 5,000 dead, an obviously exaggerated figure.

Tashkent immediately went on the offensive, with Karimov holding a press conference the next day. Below is a brief description of his statements: The President said that he had arrived in Andijan at 7:30 a.m. after being briefed by the Interior Minister Almatov at 1:45 a.m., adding that he had only sent in the troops at 6 p.m. The Uzbek authorities demanded the release of the hostages and guaranteed that the law enforcement bodies would not interfere, but would instead provide buses to allow the guerillas to leave the town. The leader of the group initially agreed to depart and only demanded the release of six inmates, to which the Uzbek authorities agreed. Later the group changed their demands to include the release of all their counterparts jailed across Uzbekistan and added political demands. At this point, the negotiations broke down, as Tashkent believed that acceding to the new demands would spark similar hostage takings across the country, and that no country in the world could or would accept such conditions. Uzbek authorities tapped and recorded the conversations of the insurgent leader's mobile phone and other rebels, who telephoned Afghanistan and contacts in Osh and Jalalabad in neighboring Kyrgyzstan. At 1 p.m. the government asked the group either to leave town or turn in their weapons and return home. Five hours later government troops surrounded the Hokimiyat. Karimov also told his audience that the events in Andijan had been planned for three months to six months by Hizb ut-Tahrir and Akramiya insurgents in southern Kyrgyzstan and the Uzbek portion of the Fergana Valley. The Uzbek leader criticized foreign journalists who called the Andijan events a "democratic revolution," stating that the country was opposed to such types of revolutions, support instead an evolutionary democratic path of development, as forcing democratic reforms could bring instead result in radical Islamic groups coming to power.

Theories

In the light of Tashkent's reticence and reluctance to disclose its information on the events in Andijan, independent assessments has taken on added value. Dr. Shirin Akiner, Lecturer in Central Asian Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London and Associate Fellow of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, conducted one of the few (besides Igor' Rotar) relatively independent on-site fact-finding studies in the immediate aftermath of the Andijan tragedy, She arrived there on May 25, 2005 - less than two weeks after the events and interviewed nearly 40 individuals. Akiner did not hide that she received assistance from the Uzbek authorities. Her findings support many claims of the Uzbek government. Some of these findings, such as that Bobir Square, where the Hokimiyat administrative offices are located, is too constricted to hold 4,000 people (as was reported by many sources), are reliable, as they are easily verified and confirmed by a map of Andijan's center provided in the HRW (Human Rights Watch) report.([xxxiv]) Another Western observer, German freelance reporter Marcus Bensmann, who has consistently been critical of the Karimov regime and sympathetic to the Uzbek opposition, was an eyewitness to the confrontation in Andijan and disagrees with Akiner's assertion.([xxxv])

A year after the tragic confrontation in Andijan, the Uzbek government tardily began releasing selected video imagery shot by the rioters themselves. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace subsequently made them available for public viewing on its website.([xxxvi])

As Akiner's observations on size of the square are correct and the number of protesters on the videotapes made by insurgents also indicates that their numbers were likely no more than 1-2 thousand, then the number of dead must necessarily be much smaller than the figures reported by the human rights community and some Western and Russian media.

The images present a very different picture of events in the square from the majority of foreign press reports twelve months earlier. The video clearly shows armed insurgents among protesters while "Allahu Akbar!" ("Allah is Great!") is repeatedly shouted to inspire the crowd. The insurgents' videos clearly show that Bobir Square and its surrounding were more than half

empty, while people - some with assault rifles and posing before camera - walked freely in mostly empty areas. The videos also captured images of individuals with submachine guns on the roof of the governor's headquarters, other insurgents calling for more people to come to the square and expressing satisfaction that their calls were successful. On the videos firing into the air is clearly heard, but some of the sounds could also perhaps be warning shots fired by government troops. Agitators told the crowd that they should not be afraid, because troops would only fire overhead and not on them, but added ominously that there would be no victory without human losses.([xxxvii]) In hindsight it is fair to say that these were highly irresponsible instructions not only in the light of what happened couple hours later, but also based on common sense and what was assumed, rightly or wrongly - of Karimov and his government as brutal and oppressive. Not only in Uzbekistan, but throughout the world, it was predictable that if an insurrectionary crowd killing government officials, brandishing weapons and taking hostages does not obey legitimate orders to disperse, then troops could resort to stiff measures to suppress demonstrations. The video evidence supports Tashkent's allegations that demonstrators were hardly concerned in quieting the situation. The films clearly show clouds of smoke from buildings burning near the square, but with no evidence that the demonstrators tried to fight the fires; instead, protesters took firefighters as hostages. The videos also clearly confirm evidence previously reported, but largely ignored in the aftermath of Andijan, that the mutineers were actively preparing Molotov cocktails.

The video evidence directly contradicts subsequent German human right advocate and journalist Bensmann's testimony to a May 11, 2006 European Parliamentary roundtable. Bensmann told his audience, "And I didn't (hear) any outcry of "Allahu Akbar" demanding an Islamic state."([xxxviii]) With all due respect to the eyewitness testimony of a human rights advocate and reporter with sympathies to demonstrators and innocent victims, the video images of the day's events should be given greater consideration. Though these video images could have been edited to omit footage that contradicted the Uzbek government's version of events, it is widely believed that they are authentic. Bensmann could be right: demonstrators did not release any written statements, and among their demands made public the establishment of an Islamic state was not mentioned. However, according to the insurgents' video footage, shouts of "Allahu Akbar" were used to inspire the crowd and were frequently chanted by the demonstrators. Though we have insufficient information on the political orientation and ideas of rebel leaders and protesters, it is clear that they were motivated and tried their best to inspire the crowd with the name of Allah. In contrast, the video shows the crowd shouting "Ozodlik" ("Freedom" or "Liberty") only a few times.

At the same roundtable, Galima Buharbaeva, an IWPR reporter during Andijan tragedy, who traveled from Tashkent to the city of Andijan where she was present for most of May 13, 2005 and witnessed the demonstration and its aftermath, conceded that some of the people who attacked the prison the night before were among those who seized the Hokimiyat (office of province's governor) the next day, but implied that they may had participated in the nighttime attack at the instigation of the Uzbek SNB (National Security Service - "Sluzhba Nacional'noj Bezopasnosti"). Buharbaeva testified, "When we interviewed people in the Hokimiyat on May 13, they admitted that had participated in the attack of the police station and the military garrison, had obtained weapons there, and were also present during the prison assault. They didn't tell us that they had been encouraged to do so by law-enforcement agencies. But when we interviewed them two days earlier, on May 11 -- and we have audio - they said the special services (SNB) had been trying to convince them to start violence earlier."([xxxix]) To the best knowledge of the author, however, Buharbaeva has never released her audio recording of the interviews she claims to have. A bullet hit Buharbaeva's notebook during shooting, though there is no credible indication that she was specifically targeted. As a fortunate journalist in a conflict zone who survived the demonstration's perhaps brutal suppression without physical injury and was later allowed to leave Uzbekistan to the West, she has since then changed her stories from her previous, more reliable and credible reports, and increasingly advocated an extremely one-sided agenda.

Vitaly Volkov, a Central Asia program correspondent for the German news agency Deutsche Welle supports the conspiracy theory that the SNB was behind the violent uprising in Andijan. Volkov told the same European Parliament roundtable that, "Information we acquired from the sources in the Uzbek SNB" indicated "the crowd that came to the prison was led by officers of the local SNB who used to oversee institutions such as prisons. Approached by their former supervisors, the prison guards had simply opened the prison gates."

RFE/RL correspondent Gulnoza Saidazimova reported, "Volkov believes the SNB then staged an assault in order to compromise the Interior Ministry. There is, he argues, a longstanding rivalry between the SNB and the Interior Ministry, whose heads represent two influential clans competing for political power in the country."([x1])

Volkov's theory is also flawed, however. Because of a longstanding rivalry between the SNB and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), it is highly unlikely that Andijan prison guards, controlled by the MVD, "had simply opened the prison gates" at the request of SNB officials, as the SNB never supervised Andijan's jail or any other penal facility controlled by the MVD.

While rivalry between the USSR's security service (KGB) and police forces dates back to the Soviet period, in independent Uzbekistan, unlike traditional Soviet practice, but similar to many post-Soviet states, the SNB and MVD became roughly equal in power and influence. As a result, their leaders were in constant competition and received almost the same level of treatment from and access to the head of the state. During the early 1990s the security services and military were distrusted by Karimov, as they had a much higher proportion of Russian and pro-Russian officers and during the Soviet era, they were subordinated directly to Moscow, with little control from Tashkent. At the same time the MVD was traditionally under double subordination (to Moscow and Tashkent) and more loyal to the republic's leader and thus came under security service scrutiny. While having its own detention facilities, the SNB never had full authority to supervise jails, as most of them were under MVD control. Only the Prosecutors Office had some supervisory authority over all Uzbek jails, including SNB and MVD detention centers.

While even conspiracy theories should be given some consideration, they should nevertheless be scrutinized for supporting evidence. Bensmann's, Buharbaeva's and Volkov's assertions, though shared by many critics of the Uzbek government, have yet to be supported by documentary evidence and/or reliable critical analysis.

Even if rebels told Buharbaeva that "the special services had been trying to convince them to start violence earlier" and she has such audio recordings and Volkov's assertion at material he "acquired from the sources in the Uzbek SNB" indicates that "the crowd that came to the prison was led by officers of the local SNB" have merit, they should be investigated, not just taken at face value. If the two reporters do not produce their documentary evidence, then their assertions seem to be incidents of reporters abusing their prerogative for protecting the confidentiality of their sources or mere propaganda.

This article is a revised version of the part of the author's report "Reassessing Andijan: The Road to Restoring U.S.-Uzbek Relations", published by The Jamestown Foundation,

[i]. The Uzbek government claims that Akrom Yuldashev organized the "Akramiya" group. Yuldashev left Hizb-Ut-Tahrir in early 1990s and wrote a brochure named "Iymonga Yo'l" ("Path to Faith"). Many reporters and observers have claimed that there was no such organization. However, the correspondent for the London-based Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) and www.uznews.net Matluba Azamatova, along with several sources reported that the group had been organized in mid 1990s. According to her, the group's primary aim was to replace old ideas by creating new progressive programs to conduct economic reforms. See: Matluba Azamatova, "4 tysiachi chelovek pikitiruiut zdanie suda v podderzhku akromiitsev 11.05.05," May 11, 2005 @ <http://www.uznews.net/st190.htm>.

[ii]. Sources vary on the exact number of protesters, estimating them from several up to about a hundred during the first two months of protests, rising to hundreds – possibly to several thousand by May 12. Protest organizers supplied participants of the actions with food, soft drinks and wooden benches. "Uzbekistan: The Andijan Uprising," International Crisis Group Briefing #38, May 25, 2005, p. 3.

[iii]. Igor Rotar, "Uzbekistan: what is known about Akramia and the uprising?" Forum 18 News Service, June 16, 2005 @ <http://www.forum18.org/>.

[iv]. Galima Bukharbaeva, "Blood flows in Uzbek crackdown," IWPR Reporting Central Asia No. 377, May 14, 2005. Bukharbaeva was an IWPR reporter who witnessed the events in Andijan, writing about the scenes of panic when armored cars randomly opened fire on crowds of demonstrators.

[v]. Azamatova, op. cit.

[vi]. Matluba Azamatova, "Controversial Trial Triggered Uzbek Violence," RCA No. 376, 13-May-05; IWPR @ http://www.iwpr.net/index.php?apc_state=henorcacentasia_uzbekunrest.html&s=o&o=archive/rca2/rca2_376_2_eng.txt.

[vii]. Ibid.

[viii]. Zaynobotdinov has been in jail since June 2005, probably for his highly visible and significant role in reporting the trial of the 23 and defending them, but more importantly, in disseminating information about Andijan tragedy, which greatly irritated the Uzbek government. At the time of drafting this report, he was serving seven-year jail term.

[ix]. Reuters, GMT+04:00 May 11, 2005-05. See also "Sotni Andizhancev organizovali piket v podderzhku 'Akromistov'" 17:18 May 11 2005 @ www.centrasia.ru, <http://centrasia.org/newsA.php4?st=1115817480>. Referring to Zainobotdinov the Washington Post reported that, "Prosecutors called for lengthy prison sentences for all of the defendants, sparking a wave of anger across the city, according to Saidzhakhon Zainobotdinov, chairman of a local human rights group." The Washington Post quoted Sainabitdinov as saying during a phone interview from Andijan, "The prosecutor's speech caused these huge rallies" and "All the protests became more intense." (http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/05/13/AR2005051300458_pf.html). Peter Finn, "Uzbek Crowd Storms Prison In Anti-Government Protest - At Least 12 Killed In Day of Clashes," Washington Post Foreign Service, May 14, 2005, p. A18 - reported from Moscow, 13 May, 2005). This author believes that either Sainabitdinov changed his story after 12-13 May events: on May 11, he reported about prosecutor's request for reduced sentences for the 23 defendants; however, when interviewed by Washington Post, he was quoted as saying something nearly in opposite direction ("Prosecutors called for lengthy prison sentences for all of the defendants, sparking a wave of anger across the city"), or Finn was unable accurately to present Sainabitdinov's words, possibly due to confusion, language and cultural barriers or bad phone connection. Information that prosecutor requested the judge to hand down greatly reduced lesser sentences for the 23 defendants on trial is supported by opposition reports and correspondents for the IWPR, the BBC and several other media outlets. See Azamatova, "4 tisyachi...," op. cit.

[x]. [Http://centrasia.org/newsA.php4?st=1115817480](http://centrasia.org/newsA.php4?st=1115817480). Azamatova, "4 tisyachi...," op. cit. Asked what specific criminal acts the defendants had carried out, chief prosecutor Ulughbek Bakirov was quoted as telling the court, "They have not yet committed any crimes - but they might commit them." Azamatova, "Controversial...," op. cit.

[xi] Ibid.

[xii] Professor Bakhtiyor Bobojonov, an Uzbek semi-independent expert on Islamic movements in Uzbekistan with a reputation for academic integrity, who works for the Uzbek Academy of Sciences stated that months after the Andijan tragedy he was shown the judge's ruling on the 23 defendants with lesser sentences than those initially requested by the prosecutor, prepared for announcement.

[xiii]. The London-based IWPR quoted one of protesters, who claimed that on the night of May 12, authorities began arresting participants at the demonstrations, and uprising was in response to these arrests. "Sharif Shakirov, the brother of one of the accused, told me that right after the court hearings, officers of the National Security Service, SNB, started arresting people who'd been outside the court. They even confiscated cars parked nearby that belonged to relatives of the defendants. The arrests continued through May 12, and that night people went to try to get their friends and family members out of detention. They started at the traffic police offices, and as numbers built up they moved towards a military unit based in the city, where they forced troops onto the defensive and seized Kalashnikovs. As the night went on, they went to the SNB building for Andijan region, where the newly-arrested people were being held." Bukharbaeva, op.cit.

[xiv]. Rebel leader Sharif Shokirov told an IWPR reporter that on May 11-12 authorities arrested six protesters and confiscated several cars, and that when people subsequently went to traffic police and did not succeed in freeing the seized vehicles, they attacked the military garrison and jail.

[xv] Bobojonov's statement was reported by www.ceic.org (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace).

[xvi]. "Uzbekistan: The Andijan Uprising," International Crisis Group Briefing #38, 25 May 2005, p. 4.

[xvii]. The weak state of the rule of law and corruption in the police, prosecutorial and judiciary bodies, combined with the alleged use of torture, means that many people in Uzbekistan can get arrested on slight grounds and are frequently unlikely to receive a fair investigation or trial.

[xviii]. Among the freed prisoners was convicted murderer Mikhail Sakhnov, who reportedly had killed three wives and was awaiting execution; he promptly went home and killed his son Andrei, according to Aleksei Volosevich, "Man'iak na svobode. Sredi osvobodivshiesya iz Andizhanskoj tiurmy byl seriinyi ubiitsca," May 18, 2005 @ <http://news.ferghana.ru/detail.php?id=3734&mode=news>. See also Dr. John C. K. Daly, "Events in Andijan anything but black and white," ISN Security Watch, June 8, 2005.

[xix]. Ed Vulliamy, "Death in Bobur Square," [The Guardian](http://www.theguardian.com), September 13, 2005.

[xx]. Bukharbaeva, op. cit.

[xxi]. Ibid.

[xxii]. Rotar, op. cit.

[xxiii]. Ibid.

[xxiv]. See reports in Uzbek @ www.RFE/RL.org - www.ozodlik.org, May 26, 2005; <http://www.ozodlik.org/domesticreports/society/uz/2005/05/9C84C1A7-2024-4C4C-B049-3369BC4FDD33.asp>. Also Vulliamy, who reported, "As they advanced, some members of the crowd took six policemen hostage to use as human shields."

[xxv]. See reports in Uzbek, op. cit. and also Galima Bukharbaeva, "Proshel mesiat s 13 maya - dnia tragicheskikh sobytii v Andizjane" IWPR, June 13 2005 @ <http://news.ferghana.ru/detail.php?id=3814&mode=news>.

[xxvi]. See story #6 in Aleksei Volosevich's "Rasstrel'nyy Andizhan. Istorii iz goroda, perezhivshogo tragediiu 13 maya," June 8 2005 @ <http://news.ferghana.ru/detail.php?id=3800&mode=news>.

[xxvii]. The chairman of the Andijan chapter of the International Society for Human Rights and Uzbekistan's Committee for Protecting Personal Rights.

[xxviii]. Daly, op. cit.

[xxix]. Muzaffarmirzo Iskhoqov, "Miatezh, vosstanie, bunt? Chto ia videl v Andizhane svoimi glazami," May 26, 2005 @ <http://centrasia.org/newsA.php4?st=1117094160>; M. Zakhidov, "Andizhanskie miatezhniki rasstreliali Artikali Rakhmatova," May 20, 2005 @ <http://centrasia.org/newsA.php4?st=1117094160>; Anderi Kudriashov, "V Andizhane miatezhniki ubili pravozashchitnika Artikali Rakhmatova," May 20, 2005 @ <http://centrasia.org/newsA.php4?st=1116593040>.

[xxx]. Ibid.

[xxxi]. "Vooruzhennyye 'akramisty' zaxvatili gorod v Uzbekistane i vypustili iz tyur'my tysyachi zakliuchennykh" @ <http://www.newsru.com/arch/world/13may2005/uzb.html>.

[xxxii]. According to Parpiev, Almatov first told him that he would try to get Yuldashev released, but in a subsequent phone call the minister took a tougher line, saying the judges in the case had refused the request, and that "the authorities will mount an assault on the rebels and take the city by force" (see, for instance, "Uzbek Troops Fire on Thousands at Andijan Rally, by IWPR staff in Uzbekistan," RCA No. 376, May 13, 2005 @ http://www.iwpr.net/index.php?apc_state=henorcacentasia_uzbekunrest.html&s=o&o=archive/rca2/rca2_376_1_eng.txt). The minister commented that meeting the demands of armed rebels would mean "an invitation for future armed insurgencies."

[xxxiii]. Nick Paton Walsh, "Uzbekistan on the brink as clashes spread," The Observer, May 15, 2005 @ <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,6903,1484252,00.html>.

[xxxiv]. Dr. Shirin Akiner, Violence in Andijan, 13 May 2005: Independent Assessment, Silk Road Paper, (Central Asia - Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, School of Advanced International Studies, The John Hopkins University, Washington, DC; Upsala University, Sweden, July 2005.) <http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/inside/publications/0507Akiner.pdf>, p. 20.

[xxxv]. See report at <http://www.paarmann.info/weblog/?p=15>.

[xxxvi]. www.ceip.org.

[xxxvii]. In Uzbek, "Qurbonsiz g'alaba bo'lmaydi" ("There will be no victory without sacrifices.") "Qurbon" in Uzbek, in this context, means specifically "human losses, victims."

[xxxviii]. Gulnoza Saidazimova, "Uzbekistan: A Bloody Mix Of Social Unrest And A Power Struggle?" RFE/RL May 11, 2006 @ www.rferl.org.

[xxxix]. Ibid.

[xl]. Ibid.