

Uzbek Activists Mark Four Years Since Andijan

Author: [News Briefing Central Asia](#)

Human rights activists in Uzbekistan and abroad commemorated the fourth anniversary of the Andijan tragedy on May 13. The date was passed over in silence by the authorities.

A group of Uzbek independent human rights activists were obstructed by the security services from holding a commemorative ceremony at which they planned to lay flowers at the Monument to Courage in the capital Tashkent.

The event never happened, as some activists were detained shortly beforehand while the homes of others were blocked off.

Bahodir Namazov of the Prisoners of Conscience Committee in Tashkent said that as he was leaving his home, he was approached by two men who said, "If you leave your house, we will arrest you and take you to the police station. We know you are one of the event organisers."

On May 13, 2005, Uzbek security forces opened fire on a demonstration in Andijan in the eastern Fergana valley, killing hundreds of civilians and injuring many more. A wave of arrest in the days that followed targeted anyone suspected of attending the demonstration.

Demands by the international community to allow an independent investigation were rejected by the Uzbek government.

It is left to civil activists to remind the world of what happened in Andijan.

In Paris, the Human Rights in Central Asia Association held a screening of a film called "Mothers of Andijan", focusing on two women's stories about their sons. One of them, a teenager, was killed outright during the violence, and the other was wounded and taken to prison, where he remains to this day. At considerable risk to themselves, these women spoke out, in the hope of obtaining justice.

"At that time, we saw with our own eyes how many innocent people died," said one elderly woman interviewed in the film. "Is there anywhere that the truth will be heard? Can it be that so many people will remain in jail unjustly?"

One of the film's producers argues that showing such material can help shape public opinion in the West, bringing greater attention to bear on a tragedy that has never been properly investigated.

Even four years on, the Uzbek authorities continue to persecute anyone who dares to write or speak about Andijan.

Uzbek human rights activists are determined to go on regardless, and to press for an unbiased

investigation.

“Many of my colleagues and compatriots feel a sense of guilt,” says Nadezhda Ataeva, who heads the Paris-based Human Rights in Central Asia Association, and is originally from Uzbekistan. “Mass murder must not be left without punishment being meted out, both to those who ordered this bloodbath and those who and perpetrated it.”

(NBCentralAsia is an IWPR-funded project to create a multilingual news analysis and comment service for Central Asia, drawing on the expertise of a broad range of political observers across the region. The project ran from August 2006 to September 2007, covering all five regional states. With new funding, the service has resumed, covering Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.)

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