



**Azam Farmonov**  
**Uzbekistan**

Azamjon Farmonov is a prominent human rights defender who was wrongly detained in Uzbekistan in 2006 on extortion charges. He was initially sentenced to nine years in prison, followed by an additional sentence of five years.

Prior to his arrest, Mr. Farmonov served as Chairman of the Syrdarya region branch of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan where focused his advocacy on defending farmer's rights, monitoring trials, and producing informational pamphlets on human rights issues that he shared with other Uzbek human rights organizations and foreign embassies.

On the morning of April 29, 2006, police arrested Mr. Farmonov and charged him with extortion. That day authorities searched Mr. Farmonov's apartment on three separate occasions, seizing, among other items, human rights pamphlets. During these raids, investigators struck Mr. Farmonov's pregnant wife, knocking her unconscious.

Following his arrest, Mr. Farmonov was held incommunicado for over a week and held in isolation without access to his family for approximately a month. During this time, authorities tortured him in an attempt to force him to make a confession. Mr. Farmonov's trial was plagued with inconsistencies and violations of fair trial standards. The government appointed a lawyer to represent Mr. Farmonov; however, his family declined the lawyer's services after learning that he was allegedly present while authorities tortured Mr. Farmonov. On June 15, 2006, the Yangiyyer City Criminal Court sentenced Mr. Farmonov to nine years in prison. Following his conviction, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch declared Mr. Farmonov to be a prisoner of conscience.

As the end of Mr. Farmonov's sentence approached he was accused of a series of minor prison infractions, such as retorting to other prisoners and failing to wear a distinguishing badge. For such alleged insults he was placed in solitary confinement on several occasions for up to twenty days. The prison authorities tortured Mr. Farmonov in order to obtain his confession to such alleged infractions by suffocating him with a rubber mask until he passed out and forcing him to listen to the screams of others being tortured as a threat of similar treatment.

On April 25, 2015, Mr. Farmonov was charged with "disobeying the legal demands of the administration of a correctional facility." He was sentenced to an additional five years in prison after a one day trial in which he did not have access to an attorney and was not permitted to introduce exonerating evidence.

As of October 25, 2016, Mr. Farmonov was subjected to two further disciplinary remands for infractions of prison regulations. His health worsened in prison; his body was covered in pustules the size of walnuts and he experienced pain in his kidney from time to time.

Mr. Farmonov was released from prison on October 3, 2017 after receiving a presidential pardon.

Freedom Now represents Mr. Farmonov as his international pro bono counsel. In November 2012, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention issued Opinion 65/2012, finding Mr. Farmonov's detention to be in violation of international law and calling for his immediate release.