



## **Uzbekistan: Conscript Asadbek Fayzullayev died in suspicious circumstances**

Asadbek Fayzullayev, a 20-year-old conscript, died in July 2021 while doing military service at an army unit near the city of Termez in southern Uzbekistan on the border with Afghanistan. The authorities claim that he drowned in the Amuzang Channel in Termez District, but his parents and the man who prepared Asadbek's body for burial saw fractures, injuries and bruises on his body which were ignored in the forensic examination conducted after his death.

Association for Human Rights in Central Asia (AHRCA) and International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR) are concerned at allegations that Asadbek Fayzullayev had suffered severe physical abuse before he died and that army officers have covered up the circumstances of his death. The organizations call on the Uzbekistani authorities to promptly open an effective investigation into the circumstances of Asadbek's death and the origin of his fractures and injuries, exhume his body, conduct a thorough forensic medical examination, and bring to justice anyone suspected of being responsible for his death and for covering up the circumstances of his death.

Asadbek was drafted into the army in March 2021. He served in military unit no. 9221 in Termez. Asadbek told his mother during visits that several officers were subjecting him to beatings and other forms of hazing and urged her to ask an influential person in their home town to intervene.

On 26 July 2021, Asadbek's mother received an SMS from an officer from his unit, saying that Asadbek had left the unit to fetch water and has not returned. The next day she and Asadbek's younger brother drove to Termez, which is located some 500 kilometres south of their home city of Djizak. When they arrived, military officers said they had still not found Asadbek and took them to a hotel in the city. The next morning, on 28 July, three guards who had been stationed outside their room during the night, told the mother and her younger son to go with them. Some ten minutes later an officer reportedly called Asadbek's mother and told her that his body had been found in the Amuzang Channel.

Asadbek's mother insisted on seeing her son's body. Some 15 military personnel stood around the body on the bank of the Amuzang Channel and reportedly tried to prevent her from inspecting it closely. Asadbek was wearing trousers, boots and a watch, information which appears to contradict the version of events subsequently issued by the military that Asadbek and a fellow-soldier had gone to collect water and decided to go for a swim to cool off in the summer heat. Asadbek's mother, a former surgical nurse, saw dried blood coming from his mouth; a rib on his left side that appeared to be broken and pointing upwards; that his jaw was bruised on the right side and appeared to be dislocated. She took



photos and a short video – which the organizations issuing this document have seen -- before the military men took the body away for the autopsy.

Later, on 28 July, Asadbek's mother and brother went to Sukhardarya Regional Prosecutor's Office in Termez to file a complaint and request an investigation into the circumstances of her son's death. She also informed the prosecutor's office that Asadbek had been subjected to hazing and beating at the military unit. Subsequently, the family sent petitions to the Military Prosecutor's Office and to the Prosecutor General's Office, urging them to investigate the circumstances of Asadbek's death.

On 28 July, Asadbek's body was transferred to his home town of Djizak for burial. Asadbek's father arrived in Djizak on 29 July from Moscow, where he had been working. He told AHRCA that by the time he arrived it was almost impossible to recognize Asadbek. His body had been wrapped in cellophane, although it was over 40 degrees Celsius in Djizak. There are allegations that this was done to speed up decomposition and make Asadbek's injuries less visible.

The man who prepared the body for burial told Asadbek's father that he found Asadbek's left hand had been cut in half; with three fingers broken on his right hand; the back of his head had an open wound and his hands and legs were bruised.

On 24 August, Asadbek's parents went to the Military Prosecutor's Office in Termez where they were reportedly shown the autopsy document for the first time which concluded that Asadbek drowned and had alcohol in his blood. There was no reference to the fractures and injuries on his body.

On 30 August, the Termez Military Prosecutor's Office turned down the family's request to open an investigation into Asadbek's death, stating that he had drowned and there was no evidence of a crime. Asadbek's parents continued lodging complaints and calling for an exhumation, but to no avail.