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Uzbekistan: An Update on Country Developments

Asian Development Bank

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1. This brief note gives an update report of the post-Andijan events in Uzbekistan. The civil unrest in Andijan occurred in May 2005, and this note reports on the developments during the second half of 2005.

2. **Uzbek Refugees** On 29 July 2005, UNHCR transferred 440 Uzbek refugees that had fled in May 2005 to the Kyrgyz Republic to Romania. The Kyrgyz Government refused to permit evacuation of 15 Uzbek refugees held in Osh on criminal charges brought by Uzbek authorities. On 1 August 2005, Uzbekistan denounced the transfer of Uzbek refugees to Romania and accused the UNHCR of violating the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees. One month later, Uzbekistan officially stated that among the 400 refugees transferred to Romania, 234 were terrorists and handed over supporting materials to Romanian authorities. On 16 September 2005, eleven of the 15 remaining Uzbek refugees held in Osh were granted refugee status and transferred to London and then on to Belgium, Finland and the Netherlands.

3. **Court Trials.** The first trial of 15 men began on 20 September 2005, accused of leading the uprising in Andijan and facing charges of terrorism, shooting of hostages and membership in banned Islamic groups. Diplomats and media monitored the process. The 15 men were defended by a group of state-appointed defense lawyers. All suspects confirmed their guilty pleas. The trial ended with the Uzbekistan Supreme Court's verdict on 14 November 2005. Twelve Uzbek defendants were sentenced to 14 to 20 years in prison while three Kyrgyz citizens were sentenced to 14 years. U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights stated that the trial appeared unfair.

4. Further trials for others accused of involvement in the events were held behind closed doors. On 3 December 2005, the first 25 defendants were found guilty of terrorism, religious extremism and other serious crimes and sentenced to 12 to 22 years in prison. On 14 December 2005, Uzbekistan's Supreme Court announced the trial for a further 114 people — 78 civilians for taking part in terrorist acts in Andijan and 36 members of the security services (including police and soldiers) for failing to prevent a series of attacks on government facilities in the city. The Supreme Court sentenced 19 soldiers and five police officers on 23 December 2005, and 11 policemen, soldiers and prison doctors to up to 11 years in prison on 28 December 2005 for neglecting their duty and allowing rebels' access to government buildings and weapons during the uprising. Rights groups have dismissed the tightly controlled trials as a show. The Uzbek Prosecutor-General's Office called the international community's criticism unfounded.

5. **International Community Reaction.** The European Union on 11 November 2005 imposed sanctions on Uzbekistan for an initial period of one year for the Uzbek Government's refusal to allow an international investigation into the uprising in Andijan. The sanctions include an embargo on exports of arms to Uzbekistan and equipment that might be used for internal repression, visa ban for Uzbek officials directly involved in suppression of Andijan uprising and suspension of meetings between the EU and Uzbekistan. The sanctions suspend the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between EU and Uzbekistan, but excludes elements that have an immediate impact on the general population and continues to permit assistance to civil society. On 22 November 2005 the UN General Assembly's Social and Humanitarian Committee adopted a resolution which expressed deep regret over the Uzbek government's rejection of repeated calls by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights for an independent inquiry into the Andijan events and voiced concern over reported arbitrary arrests and detentions by Uzbek authorities, including of eyewitnesses to the events. The Resolution was adopted by a vote of 73 to 38.