

COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

234 FORD HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

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April 16, 2003

The Honorable John B. Taylor
Under Secretary of the Treasury for International Affairs
Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20220

Dear Secretary Taylor:

We write regarding the annual meeting of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) that will be held in Uzbekistan May 4-5, 2003 to urge you to press the Uzbek authorities for resolution of a number of longstanding human rights matters prior to the convening of this event. Frankly, we regret the decision to schedule the meeting in Tashkent, which allows the Uzbek authorities to host such a prestigious event despite the oppressive nature of the regime.

In anticipation of the Tashkent meeting, we draw your attention to language in the Senate Appropriations Committee report accompanying S. 2779, which urged the Treasury Department to use this meeting to ensure that Uzbekistan demonstrates "respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, building a multiparty democracy, and implement[s] judicial and legal reforms." We also note EBRD's mandate to foster economic transition in countries "committed to and applying the principles of multiparty democracy, pluralism and market economics" and its charter specifically references the Principles of the Helsinki Final Act.

Although the Government of Uzbekistan has made some reform gestures in recent months, these measures are painfully inadequate. Uzbek authorities must be pressed to take measures that foster genuine democratic evolution and respect for the rights of the individual, as they pledged in the Declaration on the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework Between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the United States of America.

Fortuitously, Uzbekistan's newly appointed Foreign Minister, Sodyq Safayev, was Tashkent's Ambassador to Washington. He is an unusually capable, savvy and Western-oriented official, well attuned to the U.S. Government's emphasis on human rights. If anyone might influence Uzbek policies towards greater liberalism, it would be he – if seriously pressed to show progress in key areas.

Obviously, systemic change will take a long time to be realized in Uzbekistan. But it is not unreasonable to demand, in connection with the EBRD meeting and Tashkent's desire to improve its image, that certain high-profile dissidents be released from prison. We urge you to press for the release of Mamaduli Makhmudov, a well-known writer sentenced to a long jail term, who has reportedly been tortured.

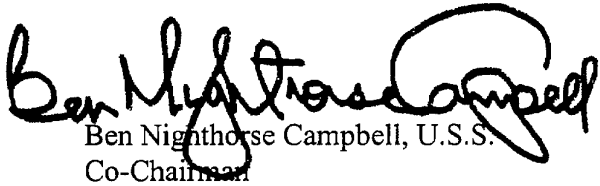
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Additionally, while a second independent human rights organization has recently been registered, the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan [HRSU], which has filed several applications since 1996, remains unregistered. Making clear to Uzbek authorities that we expect the HRSU's registration would be the next logical step in a campaign to move the government towards greater tolerance of civil society in keeping with its commitments as a participating State in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Mr. Secretary, we strongly recommend that a democracy and human rights expert be included as a member of the U.S. delegation to the EBRD meeting. Finally, we urge you to ensure that the standards of openness and access for non-governmental organizations and the media to which the Government of Uzbekistan has committed itself are indeed upheld during the meeting.

Thank you in advance for your considering these requests. The Commission stands ready to assist you and your staff as you prepare for the EBRD annual meeting in Tashkent.

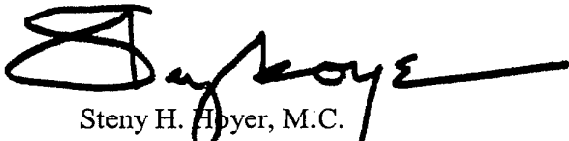
Sincerely,



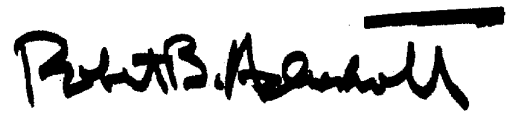
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