



**UN Human Rights Council: Adoption of the Outcome of the UPR of Uzbekistan
HRC 39th Session: Statement Delivered Under Item 6
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Two years since assuming the presidency after the death of former President Islam Karimov, Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev continues to take promising steps to reform the country's deplorable human rights record. This year authorities released several long-serving political prisoners, including a journalist, oversaw an increasingly vibrant media environment, undertook steps to combat forced labor in the cotton sector, and held a number of local officials accountable for abusive or corrupt actions following vigorous online debate. Indeed, since September 2016, authorities have released more than 30 persons imprisoned on politically motivated charges.

However, Uzbekistan's authoritarian political system remains firmly intact, with multi-party, competitive elections still very much distant dreams. The security services enjoy broad, extensive powers and thousands of people remain imprisoned on politically motivated charges.

Human Rights Watch welcomes Uzbekistan's adoption of recommendations to continue releasing all such prisoners and to bring its legislation in line with the international standards.

Human Rights Watch urges Uzbekistan to ensure persons released have access to appropriate and adequate medical care, and that [their full legal rights, including to compensation, are restored](#). We further urge the government to amend criminal code provisions relating to extremism that are commonly used to criminalize dissent (articles 159, 216, 244-1, and 244-2 of the Criminal Code), and to bring them in compliance with Uzbekistan's international human rights obligations.

In March 2017, authorities told Human Rights Watch that they had stopped using Article 221 of Uzbekistan's Criminal Code to arbitrarily extend the sentences of political prisoners. They have also reportedly released hundreds of independent Muslims-individuals who practice Islam outside strict state controls-from prison. But it is impossible to independently confirm both claims without access to a list of all persons serving sentences on charges of extremism.

Human Rights Watch regrets that Uzbekistan rejected recommendations to decriminalize consensual sexual relations between persons of the same sex and urges Uzbekistan to reconsider as a matter of priority.

Human Rights Watch urges the Uzbek government to seize this UPR as a critical opportunity to commit to long term and much-needed rights reforms.