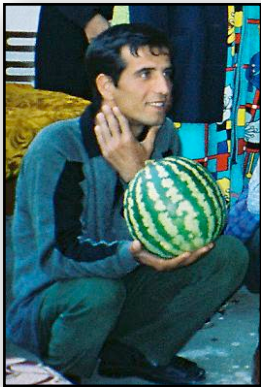


## Week 3: Pray for Tohar Haydarov (Uzbekistan)

**Arrest and background** Tohar Haydarov (33) is a Baptist from Tashkent in Uzbekistan in central Asia who is serving a ten-year sentence in labour camp on false charges of selling drugs. He is a former Muslim. In January 2010 some of Tohar's relatives asked local police to help them force him to return to Islam. The police put physical pressure on him to renounce his faith, but he refused, and they arrested him on false drug trafficking charges. Local Christians believe he is being punished for refusing to deny Christ.



When Tohar appeared in court, he could hardly walk and showed signs of having been beaten. Several of Tohar's non-Christian neighbours gave written statements to police referring to him as a "conscientious, honest and orderly person". Church members were not allowed to testify on Tohar's behalf at the trial. His father (72), who attended the hearing, was found dead the next day in his garage. Police concluded that he died by accidentally falling onto an electric heater.



**Family and friends** Tohar's church friends in Tashkent have steadfastly supported him since he was arrested, describing him as "a man with a pure conscience and an honest Christian". They have appealed twice, citing new evidence of innocence, but the Supreme Court has upheld the conviction, despite evidence of major discrepancies in the prosecution case.

Tohar is serving his sentence in a labour camp near Karshi, 400 km from Tashkent. His friends make the long journey to visit him every two months. When they visit, they are given two hours to talk by phone through a glass wall and must shout to be heard over the twenty other phone conversations going on at the same time. Tohar has had ongoing problems with back pain while in prison.

**Latest news from prison** Tohar's friends visited him on 5 January and stated that "he seems to be fine physically, though very thin. He asked us to bring drinking water when we next visit as the prison drinking water is salty... Tohar's Bible was taken away from him about a year ago and he is trying to recite Bible verses from memory... although he doesn't have the Bible, he feels like God is next to him in prison." Tohar said that he knows many people from around the world write him letters. "However, Tohar is given only a handful of them, especially those that do not contain the word God. The prison authorities promise him that when he leaves the prison he will be given all the letters. He thanks all those praying for him and thinking about him."

Tohar had hoped to be released on parole in mid-2016, but the prison authorities have told him without explanation that it will not happen. (Information from Forum 18)

### Prayer Points

1. Pray for Tohar's health and freedom from back pain.
2. Pray that the Lord will continue to encourage Tohar especially following the disappointing news that he will not be released on parole in 2016.
3. Pray for Tohar's friends in the church in Tashkent as they visit him and seek to encourage him.