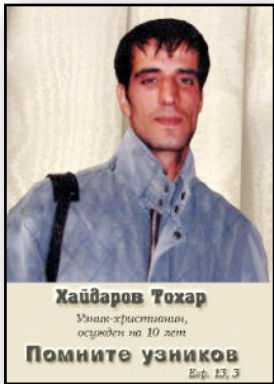
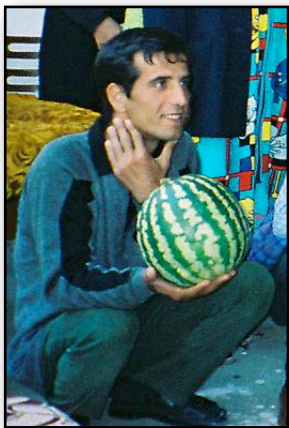


Week 4: Pray for Tohar Haydarov (Uzbekistan)



Arrest and background Tohar Haydarov (31) is a Baptist from Tashkent in Uzbekistan in central Asia who is serving a ten-year sentence in labour camp. Tohar was formerly a Muslim and, according to the members of his church, his troubles began in January 2010 when some of his relatives asked local police to help them force Tohar to return to Islam. The police put great physical pressure on Tohar to deny Jesus, but he refused. He was then arrested on false drug trafficking charges and when he appeared in court, church members reported that 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 his trial and his lawyer was not allowed into the courtroom for one hearing. Tohar's father (72) attended the hearing to support his son. The next day, he was found dead in the family's garage. Police concluded that he died by accidentally falling onto an electric heater.



Family and friends Tohar's friends from his church in Tashkent have steadfastly supported him since he was first arrested, describing him as "a man with a pure conscience and an honest Christian". They have appealed twice, citing new evidence of Tohar's innocence, but the Supreme Court has upheld the conviction, despite evidence of major discrepancies in the prosecution case. They have encouraged other Christians in Uzbekistan to pray for him (the picture at the top of this page is taken from a prayer card that they circulated). Tohar is serving his sentence in a labour camp near Karshi – some 400 kms (250 miles) from Tashkent. When his friends visit, they are given 40 minutes to talk over the phone through a glass wall, according to one church member who described the scene: "Around twenty such phone conversations were going on at the same time, and they had to shout to hear each other."

Latest news from prison News from Uzbekistan emerges at irregular intervals, due to security-related communications issues. The last report about Tohar was a few months ago: "Every two months we visit him," his friends stated, "and the last time we found out that because of back pain he was confined to the prison. He couldn't go into town for work with other prisoners which was depressing for him. He did not speak of having any problems with the prison authorities or inmates."

Prayer Points

1. Pray for Tohar's health and state of mind as he lives under harsh prison conditions.
2. Pray for Tohar's friends in the church in Tashkent as they visit him and seek to encourage him.
3. Pray for God's encouragement for all Uzbek Christians in deepening and sharing their faith in a country where those seeking to practise their religion face severe pressures from the state.