



**Catherine Ashton**

High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy  
Vice President of the European Commission

Brussels, 10 May 2010  
Our Ref: BXXX

Dear Baroness Ashton

**Subject: Uzbekistan - Fifth Anniversary of Andjzhan killings**

Since the EU-Central Asia Strategy was adopted in June 2007, Amnesty International has consistently called on the EU to ensure a clear and assertive approach to human rights abuses across the region, amid concern that this commitment has been neglected by non- human rights experts within the EU institutions and Member States.

This concern has been most striking with regards to the EU's changing position towards Uzbekistan, which was subject to an EU arms embargo from October 2005 until October 2009. The arms embargo, along with other targeted sanctions, was established by the Council as a direct response to the killing of hundreds of people in Andizhan on 13 May 2005, when security forces fired on mainly peaceful demonstrators. The EU's decision to establish sanctions was centred on the key demand that Uzbekistan allow an independent, international investigation into the events in Andizhan.

This crucial demand has subsequently been undermined by the EU, most notably through the lifting of the arms embargo in October 2009 without a single reference to the continuing need for an investigation. Uzbekistan forcefully reiterated its rejection of all calls for an investigation during both its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) session in 2008, and its examination by the UN Human Rights Committee in March 2010. Indeed, Uzbekistan has explicitly cited the lifting of EU sanctions as evidence that the matter is now closed.

Next week marks the fifth anniversary of the Andizhan killings. Amnesty International therefore urges you to reassert international pressure on Uzbekistan by making a clear statement on the anniversary, condemning the ongoing impunity for the killings and continued attacks on human rights defenders and journalists who raise the issue. We also ask you to publicly reaffirm EU policy calling for Uzbekistan to allow an independent, international investigation as a matter of urgency.

In October 2007, the EU also set up additional benchmarks to evaluate human rights progress made by Uzbekistan in a variety of areas, in order to assess the need for continuing the sanctions regime. Although the sanctions have now been lifted, Amnesty International has still not observed any positive changes in relation to these benchmarks that suggest that the human rights situation has improved, and has not seen any evidence that the EU-Uzbekistan human rights dialogue being held in Brussels today is able to deliver progress. We therefore also expect an honest statement to be made by the EU following today's dialogue. For your information, further details of our current concerns can be found in the attached briefing, which was submitted prior to the dialogue.

Amnesty International remains at your disposal to discuss this issue in greater depth and we look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely,

Nicolas Beger  
*Director, Amnesty International EU Office*