



Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Briefing

The Andijan Massacre Ten Years Later: The Human Rights Situation in Uzbekistan

Thursday, May 21st, 2015
11:30 am – 12:30 pm
2255 Rayburn House Office

Panelists

Steve Swerdlow

Steve Swerdlow, esq. is a Central Asia researcher in the Europe and Central Asia division of Human Rights Watch. Swerdlow is an attorney with over ten years of scholarly and human rights experience on Russia, Ukraine, the Caucasus, and Central Asia who received his J.D. from the University of California, Berkeley (Boalt Hall) School of Law and M.A. in International Affairs from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs with a certificate in Post-Soviet Studies from the Harriman Institute. Swerdlow was a fellow in the U.S. State Department's Young Leaders for Public Service program in Russia. He worked earlier as a human rights monitor for the Union of Council for Soviet Jews (UCSJ) in the north and south Caucasus, as well as for CARE International in Georgia, the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Russia with the displaced Meskhetian Turk population. Prior to joining Human Rights Watch, Swerdlow practiced law in San Francisco at Lieff Cabraser Heimann & Bernstein, LLP, and served as a law clerk to the Honorable Judge Dean Pregerson of the United States District Court for the Central District of California.

Mohira Ortikova & Kayum Ortikov

Mohira Ortikova is a civil society and anti-torture activist from Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Ortikova became a human rights defender after her husband, **Kayum Ortikov**, a former security guard at the British embassy in Tashkent (2003-2008) was arrested and accused of espionage by Uzbekistan's security services. Mr. Ortikov was tortured in security services custody for nine months and later released through his wife's activism and courageous work to inform human rights groups and the international media. Ortikova now heads "Life Without Torture," a coalition seeking to end torture in Uzbekistan and around the world, and recently ran as a candidate for Uzbekistan's presidency in the "Virtual Elections," organized by Uzbek civil society groups.

T. Kumar

T. Kumar is the International Advocacy Director for Amnesty International USA. He has served as a human rights monitor in several countries around the world and served as director of several refugee ships and refugee camps. Kumar has monitored several elections around the world with former President Carter and with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). He also served as a Judge of Elections in Philadelphia. He also served as a consultant to the Quaker United Nations Office and served as the United Nations Representative for Peace Brigades International. Kumar regularly lectures at U.S. Department of State's Foreign Service Institute where U.S. diplomats are trained and testifies before the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. He also speak at several Think-Tanks and Universities and was a panelist along with senior White House and UN officials in New York, Geneva, Washington DC and other places. Kumar served as a Professor at the Washington College of Law and holds an advanced degree in law from the University of Pennsylvania. Kumar was a political prisoner for over five years in his native Sri Lanka. Amnesty International adopted him as a Prisoner of Conscience and initiated a worldwide campaign for his release. He started his legal studies in prison and eventually became an Attorney-at-Law and devoted his entire practice to defend political prisoners and advance human rights.

Catherine Cosman

Catherine Cosman joined the staff of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom as Senior Policy Analyst for the OSCE region in late 2003. She has also served on the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe as senior analyst on Soviet dissent (1976-1989). At Human Rights Watch (1989-1992), she wrote several studies on ethnic conflicts in Central Asia and on human rights. At the Free Trade Union Institute (1992-1996), she worked with emerging trade unions in Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. In Estonia, she was the Senior Expert of the OSCE Mission (1996-1998.) She managed the Central Asian and Caucasus grants program at the National Endowment for Democracy, before joining the Communications Division at RFE/RL in 1999 where she founded and edited "Media Matters" and "(Un)Civil Societies." She received a BA in History from Grinnell College and a MA and an ABD in Slavic Languages and Literatures from Brown University. She also has studied at the Free University of Berlin and the All-Union Institute of Cinematography in Moscow.

Moderator

Kenneth Katzman

As a specialist with the Congressional Research Service, Dr. Katzman serves as a senior Middle East analyst for the U.S. Congress, with special emphasis on Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Persian Gulf states. He provides reports and briefings to Members of Congress and their staffs on U.S. policy on these countries and issues, and provides analysis of related legislative proposals. He has participated in several congressional delegations to the region at the Member and staff level, and given many official presentations and briefings at conferences and meetings throughout Europe, Asia, and the Islamic world. He has also written numerous articles in various outside publications, including a book entitled "The Warriors of Islam: Iran's Revolutionary Guard" which was the subject of his Ph.D. dissertation. During 1996 and again during July 2001 - March 2002, he was assigned to "close committee support" with the majority staff of the House Foreign Affairs Committee to work on Middle East issues, including hearings and legislation. On about a dozen occasions, he has testified before various Committees and Subcommittees on Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan. Dr. Katzman holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from New York University (1991). During May 1985-June 1989, Dr. Katzman was an analyst at the Central Intelligence Agency, where he prepared written reports for U.S. Middle East policymakers on leadership dynamics in Iran, Iraq, and the Persian Gulf states. Two years in the private defense consulting industry followed his tour at the CIA.