

**Support for Human Rights in Uzbekistan
A Project of Freedom House**

**Associate Cooperative Agreement No. 122-A-00-02-00030-00
(Reference: Leader Cooperative Agreement No. AEP-A-00-99-00016)**

Funded by the United States Agency for International Development

**1st Interim Narrative Report
Reporting Period: April – June 2002**

Summary

On June 13, 2002, the State Department’s Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor and USAID awarded Freedom House \$1,200,000 for the “Support for Human Rights in Uzbekistan” Project. The project supports human rights defenders (HRDs) in Uzbekistan through an integrated package of assistance of in-country training and technical assistance, financial and technical support, and exposure to successful strategies used by human rights defenders in other countries. Through programming activities, Freedom House also supports HRDs in increasing public outreach and raising public awareness of human rights.

During this reporting period, Freedom House, using the resources of the RIGHTS Consortium Rapid Response Fund, initiated this in-country project. Freedom House placed an experienced Senior Program Officer in Tashkent in April to begin the process of registration, to open the Tashkent office and resource center, and to start an assessment process to aid in development of the workplan. Freedom House also identified and hired the Project Director/Human Rights Specialist.

II. Program Activities and Results

Registration

With the help of USAID Tashkent, Freedom House filed all necessary documents for registration to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. *(Freedom House received accreditation by the Minister of Foreign Affairs to operate as a foreign organization in Uzbekistan on July 31, 2002.)*

Office/Resource Center

Due to the shortage of appropriate office space compounded with the increased demand by international organizations, Freedom House staff spent much of the start-up period to search for and negotiate an appropriate office for the Tashkent-based Human Rights Information and Resource Center. Freedom House leased a 2-story house located at 36 Hamid Sulaymonov Street, Tashkent, centrally located for easy access by human rights

defenders and others. The property will support a library, resource center and offices for Freedom House staff and trainers.

Freedom House staff began to equip the office by identifying an internet provider, applying for telephone lines, and procuring office furniture and computer equipment. Freedom House staff in Washington began compiling informational resources for the Information Center.

Staffing

During the reporting period, Freedom House finalized staffing positions for the expatriate project director and senior program officer. Freedom House recruited and hired Ms. Sikeena Karmali as project director. Ms. Karmali has an extensive human rights background, including monitoring and reporting in Asia. She also has an extensive teaching and training experience, including the development of a training curriculum on human rights for Central Asia. During the last two years, she worked in Tajikistan on humanitarian law and human rights laws. She speaks Russian and has strong project management experience. Ms. Karmali will arrive in Tashkent on or about August 15, 2002 to direct the project.

Freedom House promoted Mr. Andrew Colburn from Freedom House's Washington, DC office to the Senior Program Officer position for the Uzbekistan project. Mr. Colburn previously administered all project components for Freedom House's Uzbek human rights defenders program funded by the State Department/USAID last year. Through Freedom House's rapid response fund, Mr. Colburn arrived in Tashkent on April 17, to jump-start the project.

Freedom House also hired a security guard and has released several job announcements, including those for an office manager and trainers for the Tashkent office. Freedom House anticipates filling those positions in August upon the director's arrival.

Program Coordination and Assessment

During this quarter, Andy Colburn held coordination meetings with many of the international organizations working on human rights and democracy issues located in Tashkent. These meetings served to introduce Freedom House's new program, discuss possible areas of collaboration, and to collect both logistical and programmatic information on ongoing programs.

Several areas of cooperation were discussed. Mr. Colburn discussed possible collaboration with the OSCE to house lawyers in the Human Rights Information and Resource Centers to assist HRDs with legal issues. Freedom House also discussed coordination of work with our RIGHTS Consortium partner, ABA/CEELI, in their initiative to set up a human rights legal clinic at Tashkent State Law Institute, to explore opportunities for joint training programs between these two projects.

Freedom House also met with a UNDP officer, Ms. Feruza Abdulleava, who takes complaints and advises citizens on human rights and redress through the Uzbek law and through the UN system for reporting human rights violations. Freedom House discussed ways in which the resource centers and training of Uzbek human rights leaders could complement and sustain this type of assistance to Uzbeks.

In addition, Freedom House has been developing relations with Internews, Human Rights Watch, SOROS/OSI, and the British Embassy. They are all committed to working with Freedom House in Uzbekistan and are anxious to assist in the development of our project. In Washington, DC, the Freedom House staff discussed the creation of a Central Asia working group with groups like Human Rights Watch and others active in the region to keep apprised of developments and share information.

Local Human Rights Defenders

Freedom House held initial meetings with many of the local human rights defenders, including a roundtable discussion in mid-May, to inform them of the new project and learn about their recent work. Local partners were enthusiastic about the project and about contributing to the development of the Resource Centers and in sharing their ideas for necessary training.

Future Activities

Next Quarter, with the arrival of the new director in August, Freedom House will complete recruiting and hiring of local staff and complete a participatory assessment to support the development of the annual workplan. The workplan will include targeted areas of training and assistance for both HRDs as well as local Freedom House staff.