

*Statement*  
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*The OSCE's Role in Uzbekistan:*  
*Present Activities and Future Options*

*At the US Helsinki Commission*  
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- The OSCE is closely monitoring the situation in Uzbekistan through its presence on the ground. **OSCE Chairman-in-Office**, Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel has expressed concern about recent events in the city of Andijan on 15 May 2005. He has encouraged all sides to work towards a peaceful resolution of the present crisis. To this end, the OSCE has offered its assistance to address both immediate and deeper causes of unrest in order to find a sustainable solution.
- The very fact that the OSCE has a **presence on the spot** allows the OSCE community to have a clearer picture of the situation on the ground, and it can play a key role in working with the parties to reduce tensions.
  1. The OSCE, first of all, stands ready to **facilitate immediate political dialogue**. As CiO Rupel put it, "Further loss of human lives must be avoided at all cost. Any differences that may exist should not represent an excuse for the use of force on either side." This is something that the OSCE is well-placed to perform – through the Centre, the Chairmanship, and/or an envoy of the Chairman.
  2. Secondly, the Organization is ready to **assist** Uzbekistan with **upholding its OSCE commitments**. The Centre in Tashkent is already implementing such assistance through concrete projects across the OSCE's three dimensions of security (the politico-military, economic and environmental, and human dimensions).
  3. Thirdly, in addition to existing projects, OSCE has particular expertise and experience in a range of issues related **to conflict prevention and civil society building**. Through its Institutions (Representative on Freedom of the Media, High Commissioner on National Minorities and ODIHR) the Organization is particularly well-placed to focus on issues such as access to information, promotion of inter-ethnic dialogue and human rights training for police, military and prison officials.

If requested by the Uzbek authorities, such short-term activities could have immediate impact.

4. Fourthly, **trial monitoring activities**, particularly with regard to the case of the 23 businessmen in Andijan, could be conducted with immediate effect.
  5. In close co-operation with the Uzbek authorities, and possibly partner organisations such as the UN, the OSCE is ready to help conduct or support an **international investigation** into recent events in Andijan.
- The future involvement of OSCE will depend on several factors. **The most important will be the political will of the Uzbek Government.**

### **Possible OSCE involvement and activities in Uzbekistan**

#### *Status:*

- The Government has not favored an involvement of international organizations, foreign countries and journalists in the activities related to the events in Andijan.
- During the press conference on May 18, the President however did stated that OSCE could get entrusted in taking part in the investigation of the events in Andijan.
- The Government is under pressure especially from international environment. It will probably act very cautiously and it will take time to engage in broader co-operation.

#### *What is needed?*

##### Immediately:

- prevention of further use of force and/or preventing humanitarian problems on the border region with Kyrgyzstan (Kara Suu and possibly other places);
- independent international investigation of the events in Andijan;
- allow the local population and international community to get information;
- monitoring of trials, arrests, and demonstrations;
- closer co-operation in fighting terrorism.

##### Short and Medium term

- deepening of democratization processes: promotion of media freedom, rule of law and development of civil society;
- intensifying the speed of economic reform through further liberalization.

#### *Possible OSCE activities:*

OSCE should focus on following possibilities:

- Follow very closely the developments related to events in Andijan and prevent other violent actions. Post conflict/post trauma assistance.
- Confidence-building measures
  - Within the country and vis-à-vis international community
  - Reaching out to local community
- Thorough international investigation of what happened
  - establishing an international expert commission; if it materializes the OSCE could offer international experts (in anti-terrorism, policing, intelligence, prison, media etc)

- Tailored trainings based upon the outcome of investigation
  - The President acknowledged that Andijan happened also as a consequence of serious shortcomings in the work of different services (military, police, prison, intelligence)
- Role of mass media
  - There has been information blockade (TV, internet). The government informed very late and it has not offered clear answers to several very important questions (who started the shootings; how many people died, how many of them were armed civilians; how many people were in the streets of Andijan and how many of them were around regional administration building, when shootings started). International journalists were not allowed to Andijan, what provoked a lot of speculations and unconfirmed information
  - Promoting the freedom of media through legal assistance, furthering access to information, holding of trainings for local journalists, for government agencies, official spokespersons
- Trial monitoring activities
  - Close monitoring of trials related to events in Andijan
- Economic Evaluation/Assessment of Andijan
  - The accused Akromisti were prominent business people who had developed small production facilities employing local inhabitants.
  - An investigation of business development should be conducted, for example the availability of credit for small and medium business development
  - Strengthening business associations and improve their lobbying capabilities with the government and parliament.
  - Providing farmers and business people with knowledge about their legal rights.