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European Human Rights Court Moves to Stop Gay Journalist's Deportation to Uzbekistan

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A top European human rights court has said the deportation of a gay journalist from Russia to Uzbekistan is illegal as long as the court has not decided on his case, according to his lawyer.

Khudoberdi Nurmatov, an openly gay Uzbek journalist writing for the investigative newspaper Novaya Gazeta is set to be deported to Uzbekistan after a Moscow court ruled earlier this week that he had violated immigration rules. He has been held in a detention center since his arrest on Tuesday.

Now the Strasbourg-based European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has forbidden his deportation until it reviews Nurmatov's case, the journalist's lawyers have said.

A copy of the injunction was not yet available on the ECHR's website at the time of writing.

Related article: Gay Uzbek Journalist Facing Deportation Attempts Suicide in Detention

Tatyana Glushkova, a lawyer who works for the Memorial human rights organization, told Novaya Gazeta that Nurmatov's legal team had filed a complaint with the ECHR on account of the prevention of torture and the right to family life.

She added that the ECHR's review could last up to six months.

Nurmatov, who writes under the pen name Ali Feruz, is openly gay and there are concerns his sexual orientation could pose a threat on his return to Uzbekistan, where homosexuality is a punishable offense.

The journalist reportedly tried to commit suicide on Aug. 2 while in detention, one of his lawyers Philip Shipov told the state-run TASS news agency.

Human rights organizations such as Reporters Without Borders, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International have called on the Russian authorities to stop the deportation. The presidential Human Rights Council is also reviewing his case.

So far, the Kremlin has seemed unwilling to interfere. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Thursday that "the situation is very complicated and a range of factors will not let us close our eyes to the range of violations which have taken place."

Uzbekistan ranks 169th out of 180 countries in the RSF's 2017 World Press Freedom Index.

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