

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

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### **Kyrgyzstan: Dismay at murder of independent journalist in Osh**

Amnesty International is dismayed at the recent murder in Kyrgyzstan of a young independent journalist and editor, Alisher Saipov, amid reports that the killing was linked to his professional activities. The organization is concerned that his death will have a further chilling effect on the rights to freedom of expression not only in Kyrgyzstan but in Uzbekistan and throughout Central Asia.

Amnesty International is urging the authorities in Kyrgyzstan to ensure that the investigation they have launched into the murder of Alisher Saipov is thorough, independent and impartial with the findings made public and the suspected perpetrators brought to justice in proceedings conforming to international standards.

Amnesty International also calls on the authorities in Kyrgyzstan to take urgent steps to ensure that all human rights defenders and independent journalists in Kyrgyzstan, including those covering Uzbekistan, are able to carry out their activities in safety and without fear of harassment or intimidation.

On 24 October 2007 Alisher Saipov, was killed in a street in his home town of Osh in southern Kyrgyzstan as he was walking down a street with an acquaintance. He was shot reportedly at point blank range by an unidentified assailant. Alisher Saipov had turned 26 in September and was married with a two-month-old daughter. A Kyrgyzstani national of Uzbek origin he was the editor of an Uzbek-language newspaper *Siyosat* (Politics) which covered issues, including human rights, relevant to Kyrgyzstan and also neighbouring Uzbekistan. *Siyosat* which he founded in the spring of 2007, was said to have gained widespread popularity quickly, especially in Uzbekistan, where independently-published information is difficult to obtain. Alisher Saipov also worked as a correspondent for Voice of America and contributed to other independent websites covering Central Asia, such as [uznews.net](http://uznews.net) and [Ferghana.ru](http://Ferghana.ru) among others. He often covered sensitive subjects such as the fallout from the May 2005 killings in Andizhan in neighbouring Uzbekistan, the treatment of Uzbek refugees from Andizhan in Kyrgyzstan, the activities of Uzbekistani security services on Kyrgyzstani territory, anti-terror cooperation between Uzbekistani and Kyrgyzstani security forces as well as the activities of banned Islamic groups and parties such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Hizb-ut-Tahrir. He had reportedly received anonymous threats and over the last few months parts of the Uzbekistani media had conducted a campaign denouncing his reporting as an attack on the Uzbekistani state.