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PUBLIC STATEMENT

KYRGYZSTAN

Human rights activists punished for organizing peaceful protest

Amnesty International is calling for the immediate release of three human rights activists in Jalal-Abad, Kyrgyzstan, whom the organization believes have been arrested solely for organizing a peaceful protest.

Albert Korgoldoev, the head of the regional branch of the Kyrgyz Committee for Human Rights, Tynybek Batyraliev and Abdunazar Mamatislamov were members of a committee which was preparing a peaceful demonstration in Jalal-Abad on 25 September against President Akayev's proposal to hold a nationwide referendum on constitutional changes.

The committee had applied to the local authorities in Jalal-Abad for permission to hold the demonstration. Members of parliament were expected to attend and address the meeting.

According to information received, the three men were arrested on 23 September and taken into police custody. They were allegedly charged with calling on the public to attend the 25 September protest demonstration.

They were sentenced the following morning by Jalal-Abad City Court to 15 days' administrative detention for violating public order under Article 163 of the Kyrgyz Civil Code. Apparently, they had not been given access to a lawyer. Criminal proceedings have reportedly also been opened against Abdunazar Mamatislamov.

The Kyrgyz Parliament is said to oppose President Akayev's decree to hold a referendum on constitutional changes. Members of parliament object to proposals which would change the structure of parliament and reduce parliamentary immunity. The changes are also intended to introduce constitutional guarantees for complete press freedom in Kyrgyzstan and private land ownership.

According to news from Jalal-Abad the protest demonstration publicized by Albert Korgoldoev, Tynybek Batyraliev and Abdunazar Mamatislamov went ahead peacefully on 25 September.

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