

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER RELEASED WITH CONDITIONS

After more than five months of detention, prisoner of conscience Serikzhan Bilash was released from house arrest on 17 August after he pleaded guilty and agreed to stop campaigning on human rights violations in China. He will pay a fine of \$300 and remain under travel restrictions for three months. Following his release, Serikzhan stated that he had accepted the terms because he was told that he would face seven years in prison if he did not. He said that his organization would continue his work after he stepped down.

NO FURTHER ACTION IS REQUESTED. MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO SENT APPEALS.

Serikzhan Bilash, the leader of the human rights organisation defending the human rights of ethnic Kazakhs in China, had been detained since 10 March 2019. Transferred from his home in Almaty to the capital of Kazakhstan, Nur-Sultan, he was placed under house arrest and charged with “incitement of social, national, clan, race, class or religious hatred” which carries a penalty of up to seven years in prison. Five months later Serikzhan Bilash was brought before a judge and pleaded guilty, and on 17 August released on the condition that he stopped his campaign work. He will be under travel restrictions for three months and will have to pay a fine of \$300.

The charges against Serikzhan Bilash were reportedly based on remarks that he made at a meeting with members of the Uighur community in Kazakhstan in early February 2019 at which he stated that “Jihad today is not taking up a gun and fighting in Syria. Jihad is information and propaganda”. At a hearing on 29 July in Nur-Sultan, it was decided that the case would be transferred to the city of Almaty. Serikzhan Bilash, was transferred to his home in Almaty on 15 August, and a hearing was held on 16 August, at 19.30.

Serikzhan Bilash set up the NGO Atajurt Eriktileri (Atajurt) in 2017 to assist the relatives of ethnic Kazakhs detained in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR). He worked closely with Amnesty International researchers in exposing human rights violations in XUAR. He contributed to an Amnesty International report published in September 2018 (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa17/9113/2018/en/>). The publication documents disturbing reports of intrusive surveillance, arbitrary detention and forced indoctrination targeting Uighurs, Kazakhs and other predominantly Muslim ethnic groups in China’s XUAR.

We will continue to monitor this case and respond to any developments in Serikzhan Bilash’s situation as appropriate.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Serikzhan Bilash (he/his)

THIS IS THE THIRD AND FINAL OUTPUT FOR UA 46/19

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur57/0894/2019/en/>

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