

EXTERNAL

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@Karishal ASANOV

£Kazakhstan

Karishal Asanov was arrested on 19 August 1992 in Alma-Ata, the capital of Kazakhstan, on a charge of "infringement upon the honour and dignity of the President" (Article 170-3 of the Kazakhstan Criminal Code). He is being held in pre-trial detention. Amnesty International believes that this is a violation of Karishal Asanov's right to freedom of expression, and considers him to be a prisoner of conscience. Amnesty International is calling on the authorities in Kazakhstan to release Karishal Asanov immediately and unconditionally.

Karishal Asanov is 59 years old and is an assistant professor at the Kazakh State University in Alma-Ata. The charge against him relates specifically to the publication in mid-1992 in the opposition newspaper Khak of an article entitled "Don't believe the President's Smile", comprising extracts from a book published by Karishal Asanov entitled "Thoughts on a People's Fate or a Word about the Phantom of Sovereignty". The newspaper Khak is published in Moscow by the Alash political party, which has not been granted official registration by the authorities in Kazakhstan. Three Alash party leaders are currently on trial in Kazakhstan on a combination of political and criminal charges.

Beginning on 14 July 1992 Karishal Asanov's home was searched three times by police, who confiscated a large number of documents including his book manuscripts and personal letters. In early August Karishal Asanov was detained for four days in a psychiatric hospital in Alma-Ata where he underwent a compulsory psychiatric examination. He was found to be completely healthy and was released. He was finally arrested on 19 August on the orders of Deputy Procurator General Aleksandr Buksman, who later told human rights activists that he had sanctioned Karishal Asanov's arrest "to stop his criminal activities".

Karishal Asanov suffers from hypertension, and it has been alleged that he has not received adequate medical treatment while in detention. It has also been reported that for at least three weeks after his arrest he was not allowed access to a defence lawyer of his own choosing, although that issue has apparently now been resolved.

Article 170-3 was added to the Kazakhstan Criminal Code in June 1991. At meetings in April 1992 with senior government officials in Kazakhstan an Amnesty International delegation expressed the organization's concern about the terms of Article 170-3 and the similarly worded Article 170-4, which punishes "infringement upon the honour, dignity and personality of a people's deputy". Amnesty International is concerned that Articles 170-3 and 170-4 place unwarranted restrictions on the right to freedom of expression, and may be invoked to punish people for their political opposition to the authorities.