

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS AT RISK

Human rights defenders in Kyrgyzstan have been threatened with violence for providing free legal assistance to people accused of taking part in violent clashes between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbek people in June 2010. Their lives may be in danger.

On the afternoon of 12 October, staff at the offices of the human rights organization Spravedlivost (Justice), were harassed by two unknown men who said they would return to the offices next day. The office, which is based in the southern city of Jalal Abad, has been providing free legal and judicial assistance to both ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbek people following the violence which broke out in the south of the country in June, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of people.

The two men claimed to be relatives of some ethnic Kyrgyz who died during the June violence. According to the staff at the office, the two men questioned them about how they were funded, and asked why they were “employing lawyers for killers”. The two men also asked for the full names and contact details of the employees and for details about the director of the organization.

The two men were allegedly related to some of the 16 people killed on 13 and 14 June when violence broke out near a cotton factory in the southern region of Suzak. Fourteen ethnic Uzbek men have been charged in relation to the incident in the so called “SANPA” case. The trial began on 30 September in the town of Nookan, in the Jalal Abad region. However, it was postponed until 14 October after the families of the “SANPA” victims reportedly beat some of the relatives of the defendants and one of the lawyers provided by Spravedlivost during the court hearing. The two men told the staff of Spravedlivost that the lawyers they had hired for some of the ethnic Uzbek defendants must sit quietly during the trial, must not ask questions or submit petitions to the trial judge. According to the staff at the office, two men threatened “we’ll show you” to the office staff and said that they would return.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Russian, Kyrgyz, English or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to take all the necessary measures to guarantee the safety of the staff of human rights organization Spravedlivost.
- Calling on the authorities to ensure that human rights defenders, lawyers and other civil society actors are able to carry out their legitimate work without fear of harassment or obstruction.
- Urging the authorities to take immediate action to ensure that trials relating to the June violence are conducted in an orderly, fair and transparent manner.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 27 NOVEMBER 2010 TO:

Minister of Internal Affairs
Zarylbek Rysaliev
Frunze Street, 469
Bishkek 720040, KYRGYZSTAN
Fax: +996 312 62 38 53
Email: pressa429@gmail.com
Salutation: Dear Minister

General Prosecutor
Kubatbek Baibolov
72, Orozbekova Street
Bishkek 720040, KYRGYZSTAN
Fax: +996 312 66 54 11
Salutation: Dear General Prosecutor

And copies to:
President
Roza Otunbaeva
Dom Pravitelstva
Bishkek 720003, KYRGYZSTAN
Fax: +996 312 62 50 12
Email: admin@kyrgyz-el.kg

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS AT RISK

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Amnesty International has ongoing concerns regarding the reported harassment and obstruction that human rights defenders, lawyers and civil society activists are facing in the south of Kyrgyzstan following the June violence. Human rights defenders and lawyers who are working on the cases of ethnic Uzbek people charged with organizing the June violence have been physically and verbally attacked. During some of the subsequent trials of detainees, members of the public have also attacked defense lawyers in the presence of police and court officials, who have done little or nothing to stop the attacks.

In the recent case of human rights defender Azimzhan Askarov, relatives of the police officer he was accused of killing, threatened and attacked the defendants' lawyers in court, hitting them with sticks and throwing a glass at them. Court officials, including the judge, reportedly intervened only sporadically to stop the violence and restore order. The defendants' lawyers were reportedly not given the opportunity to question witnesses or submit petitions. When the lawyers expressed concern that they would not be able to defend their clients under these conditions the judge reportedly threatened to have their licences to practice revoked. The dead police officer's relatives also attacked family members of the defendants outside the courtroom. Police officers at the scene did not intervene. The appeal court hearing on the Azimzhan Askarov's case is scheduled to be held on 25 October in Jalal Abad region.

In another case related to the June violence, defendant lawyer Tahir Asanov was attacked in court after calling for an investigation into police ill-treatment against his client and nine other men during their trial in Osh, southern Kyrgyzstan. Tahir Asanov's client is accused with nine other men of charges ranging from involvement in the death of the Kara Suu District Police Chief and his driver, to taking part in riots. After he requested an investigation into the beatings, the relatives of the murdered police chief present in the courtroom shouted insults at Tahir Asanov and attacked him. After the hearing ended, relatives followed Tahir Asanov outside the courtroom and attacked him, beating him for about 10 minutes. Police were present while he was being beaten but did not intervene.

Spravedlivost is a prominent independent human rights organization based in Jalal Abad city. Members of Spravedlivost have taken up cases of police brutality, torture or other ill-treatment for many years. They provide legal assistance to anyone who comes to their offices regardless of their ethnic origin or status. Spravedlivost has been actively documenting and monitoring human rights violations that occurred in Jalal Abad during the June violence.

UA: 220/10 Index: EUR 58/018/2010 Issue Date: 13 October 2010

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL

