

URGENT ACTION

DROP ALL CHARGES AGAINST JOURNALISTS

On 10 October 2024 Leninsky District Court in Bishkek convicted four employees of “Temirov Live” and “Ayt Ayt Dese”, two independent media projects that have investigated allegations of corruption in Kyrgyzstan. Makhabat Tazhibek-kyzy, the head of “Temirov Live”, was sentenced to six years in prison, journalist and akyn (poet) Azamat Ishenbekov was sentenced to five years in prison, while factchecker Aike Beishekeeva and investigative journalist Aktilek Kaparov were sentenced to three years of probation on trumped-up charges of “calls for active disobedience [...] and for mass riots, as well as calls for violence against citizens”. Seven other defendants were acquitted.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Asanaliyev Maksat Kubatovich
General Prosecutor
A. Toktonaliev Street, 139
Bishkek
720040
Kyrgyz Republic

Email: statement@prokuror.kg

Dear General Prosecutor,

I am writing to express my deep concern over the guilty verdicts handed down on 10 October 2024 against “Temirov Live” journalists: Makhabat Tazhibek-kyzy, Azamat Ishenbekov, Aike Beishekeeva and Aktilek Kaparov.

They were found guilty of “calling for active disobedience and mass riots, as well as calls for violence against citizens” based on a video published on social media that accused government officials of corruption. The journalists deny the charges. I am concerned that these charges have been brought to punish the journalists for their criticism of the authorities, in violation of the right to freedom of expression.

I urge you to:

Do everything within your power to ensure that Makhabat Tazhibek-kyzy and Azamat Ishenbekov are released immediately, and that all charges against all four convicted journalists of “Temirov Live” and “Ayt Ayt Dese” media are dropped, and that they are allowed to continue their professional activities in Kyrgyzstan without undue restrictions.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 16 January 2024, during a heavy-handed police operation, 11 journalists and media workers associated with the “Ayt Ayt Dese” and “Temirov Live” projects, were detained for questioning and taken to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. They were denied access to a lawyer while in police custody, and on 30 January all 11 were transferred to the pretrial detention centre SIZO 1 in Bishkek.

According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the mass searches and detentions were part of a criminal investigation into alleged “calls for active disobedience [...] and for mass riots, as well as calls for violence against citizens” (Article 278(3) of the Criminal Code) stemming from the linguistic examination of a video published on the “Ayt Ayt Dese” Youtube channel on 13 December 2023. All 11 were charged with Article 278 (3) but denied that they were guilty and maintained that the charges were, politically motivated to punish them for their criticism of the authorities.

On 10 October 2024 the Leninsky District Court in Bishkek convicted four journalists: Makhabat Tazhibek-kyzy was sentenced to six years in prison, Azamat Ishenbekov was sentenced to five years in prison, while Aike Beishekeeva and Aktilek Kaparov were sentenced to three years of probation. Seven other defendants were acquitted for lack of evidence.

Makhabat Tazhibek-kyzy is the head of the media-channel “Temirov Live” and its side project “Ayt Ayt Dese”, and wife of Bolot Temirov, the exiled investigative journalist and founder of “Temirov Live”. Azamat Ishenbekov is a journalist and akyn (poet) from “Ayt Ayt Dese” project, who in the form of folk songs exposed corruption and abuses by the Kyrgyzstani authorities.

Along with the sentencing on 10 October the court also decided that the young son of Makhabat Tazhibek-kyzy and Bolot Temirov should be placed under state guardianship. However, to date, this decision has not been enforced and the child is under the care of his grandparents.

Since its launch in January 2020, “Temirov Live” has faced ongoing pressure from authorities. In January 2022, drug enforcement officers searched its office and detained Bolot Temirov. By November 2022, Temirov, who held dual citizenship in Russia and Kyrgyzstan, was stripped of his Kyrgyzstani citizenship and deported to Moscow. Authorities accused him of illegally obtaining Kyrgyzstani citizenship and border violations, actions widely viewed as retaliation for his criticism of the government.

Amnesty International has documented the deterioration of the right to freedom of expression in Kyrgyzstan, including the closure or restriction of the activities of independent media outlets and the criminal prosecution of activists, including in the so-called “[Kempir-Abad case](#)”.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Russian/Kyrgyz

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 6 January 2025

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Makhabat Tazhibek-kyzy, she/her

Aktilek Kaparov, he/him

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: [\[First UA\]Kyrgyzstan: Release Journalists And Media Workers: Makhabat Tazhibek-kyzy and Aike Beishekeeva](#)