

# URGENT ACTION

## ETHNIC UZBEK JOURNALIST MUST BE RELEASED

**Ulugbek Abdusalamov, an ethnic Uzbek journalist in detention in southern Kyrgyzstan, is at risk of ill-treatment. Amnesty International believes that he is a prisoner of conscience and calls for his immediate and unconditional release.**

Ulugbek Abdusalamov is a prominent member of the Uzbek community in the Jalal-Abad region in southern Kyrgyzstan and Chief Editor of the regional Uzbek newspaper *Didor* (Meeting, in Russian). He has been charged with 'inciting ethnic hatred' under Article 299 of the Kyrgyzstani Criminal Code.

The Jalal-Abad prosecutor's office has stated that the charge of 'inciting ethnic hatred' has been brought against Ulugbek Abdusalamov during an investigation into a violent incident which took place in the A. Batirov University in Jalal-Abad town on 19 May. However, Ulugbek Abdusalamov was not in Jalal-Abad, but working in the capital, Bishkek, that day. The authorities have also claimed that two articles published by Ulugbek Abdusalamov in his newspaper warrant the charge brought against him. Amnesty International has seen both articles and believes that neither constitutes incitement to ethnic hatred.

Ulugbek Abdusalamov was with a colleague in the region of Osh in southern Kyrgyzstan when widespread violence broke out on 10 June. They both managed to return to the village of Bazar Korgan, in the neighbouring Jalal-Abad region. Due to the poor security situation in the village, Ulugbek Abdusalamov and his colleague tried to leave on 14 June. Their car was reportedly stopped by uniformed men in a black jeep with no number plates. They said that they were looking for Ulugbek Abdusalamov and took him away.

Ulugbek Abdusalamov was initially held in a detention centre in the district of Bazar Korgan. On 15 June, he was moved to the detention centre of the State Security Services in Bazar Korgan and on the same day transferred to a detention centre in another district. On 16 June, he was transferred to a detention centre in the town of Jalal-Abad where he is still being held. He has been appointed a state lawyer.

His family were denied access when they tried to visit him although they were told that a food parcel they had brought would be delivered to him. Local human rights defenders have confirmed that neither they nor his family are being allowed to visit him in detention. There are also concerns for Ulugbek Abdusalamov's health as he suffered from a cerebral haemorrhage in 2009 and has high blood pressure and a heart condition.

**PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Russian, Kyrgyz, English or your own language calling on the interim government to:**

- Release prisoner of conscience Ulugbek Abdusalamov immediately and unconditionally;
- ensure that he has access to a lawyer of his choice, if requested, and that his family are able to visit him;
- ensure that Ulugbek Abdusalamov has access to medical care;
- allow human rights defenders, journalists and other civil society activists to carry out their work without the threat of harassment or obstruction by the authorities.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 12 AUGUST 2010 TO:**

Minister of Internal Affairs of the

Interim Government

Bolotbek Sherniazov

Frunze Street, 469

Bishkek 720040

KYRGYZSTAN

Fax: +996 312 68 20 44

Email: [pressa@mail.mvd.kg](mailto:pressa@mail.mvd.kg)

Salutation: Dear Acting Minister

Deputy Head of Interim Government

Azimbek Beknazarov

Dom Pravitelstva

Bishkek 720003

KYRGYZSTAN

Fax: +996 312 21 86 27

Email: [admin@kyrgyz-el.kg](mailto:admin@kyrgyz-el.kg)

Salutation: Dear Deputy Head of

Interim Government

Interim President

Roza Otunbaeva

Dom Pravitelstva

Bishkek 720003

KYRGYZSTAN

Fax: +996 312 21 86 27

Email: [admin@kyrgyz-el.kg](mailto:admin@kyrgyz-el.kg)

Salutation: Dear Interim President

**And copies to:**

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

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ulugbek Abdusalamov is an active member of the Uzbek community and Chief Editor of the regional newspaper *Didor* which publishes articles in Uzbek, Kyrgyz and Russian. Ulugbek Abdusalamov is a strong advocate of Uzbek language and culture. He is associated with Kadirzhan Batirov, a prominent ethnic Uzbek figure and a leader of the political party *Rodina* (Homeland, in Russian). Local human rights defenders claim that the authorities are currently targeting Kadirzhan Batirov's close associates in the Uzbek community, including Ulugbek Abdusalamov, who they have accused of being instrumental in starting the violence in June.

Ulugbek Abdusalamov also is a member of the Constitutional Commission which was established by the interim government to draft a new Constitution after former President Kurmanbek Bakiev was overthrown in April following violent confrontations between government and opposition supporters. He produced translations of the proposed new Constitution in Uzbek, which he then published in both, Kyrgyz and Uzbek, in his newspaper.

On 19 May, 70 people were injured and three people died during clashes between Kyrgyz and Uzbek crowds at the A. Batirov University in the town of Jalal-Abad. Kyrgyz demonstrators had gathered in the morning to protest against public speeches made earlier in the month by Kadirzhan Batirov at meetings with the Uzbek community. Following the demonstration, some made their way to the university. In the afternoon, some people in the crowd reportedly started throwing stones at the university building at which point the police reportedly fired shots into the air. The crowd then reportedly broke into the university building and destroyed some of the property. Gun fire was reportedly heard from inside the building.

The Jalal-Abad Prosecutor's office alleges that Ulugbek Abdusalamov is one of 54 people who have been connected to this incident. However, Amnesty International has received credible information that he was in the capital, Bishkek that day. Reportedly on the same day, the offices of *Didor* were looted and the newspaper is currently not operational.

The recent violence which has devastated large parts of southern Kyrgyzstan is said to have started on 10 June with clashes between rival gangs of mostly Kyrgyz and Uzbek youths which rapidly escalated into large-scale arson, looting and violent attacks, including killings, on mainly Uzbek-populated districts in Osh. Subsequently, the violence spread to the city of Jalal-Abad and surrounding towns and villages. The south of Kyrgyzstan is home to a large ethnic Uzbek community and was the power base of the former president.

While the cause of the clashes is unclear, the interim government blamed the violence on supporters of former President Kurmanbek Bakiev and on organized criminal groups with the intent on destabilizing the situation in the country ahead of a referendum on a new constitution which took place on 27 June.

An estimated 400,000 people, both Kyrgyz and Uzbeks, fled their homes following the violence in Osh, Jalal-Abad and surrounding areas which erupted on 10 June. About 100,000, mainly Uzbek women, children and elderly, sought refuge in neighbouring Uzbekistan but most of them are now reported to have returned to Kyrgyzstan. According to the UN, about 375,000 people remain internally displaced within Kyrgyzstan.

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