

URGENT ACTION

VIOLENCE AT TRIAL OF PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE

Prisoner of conscience Azimzhan Askarov, seven others being tried along with him in Kyrgyzstan and their lawyers and relatives, are at risk. On 2 September, the first day of the trial of the eight in connection with the death of a police officer, lawyers and relatives of the defendants were intimidated, threatened and attacked inside and outside the court.

Azimzhan Askarov and seven others (six men and one woman, all ethnic Uzbeks), are on trial on charges of "inciting ethnic hatred" and "organizing mass disorder" in connection with the death of the police officer in the city of Bazar-Korgan in southern Kyrgyzstan, during violence which occurred across the region in June. Their trial was moved from Bazar-Korgan, where Azimzhan Askarov had been detained until the beginning of August to a small town, Massi, some 20km away. The decision to move the trial was apparently only taken late on 1 September. Repeated requests from Azimzhan Askarov's lawyers to move the trial away from southern Kyrgyzstan were ignored by the court. The next hearing has been scheduled for 6 September.

Human rights activists monitoring the trial reported that relatives of the accused were not given access to the courtroom, apparently because there was no room. However, relatives of the police officer who was killed as well as scores of plainclothes and uniformed police officers were allowed in. Amnesty International has been informed that relatives of the dead officer threatened and attacked the defendants' lawyers in court hitting them with sticks and throwing a glass at them. The glass smashed against the bars of the cage holding the defendants, and splinters hit one of the lawyers. Court officials, including the judge, reportedly intervened only sporadically to stop the violence and restore order. The defendants' lawyers were 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. When the defendants' relatives appealed to the officers to stop the violence, the officers reportedly told them to go away.

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

- Urging the authorities to immediately move the trial of Azimzhan Askarov and seven others to another part of the country, preferably the capital Bishkek;
- Urging them to ensure that the trial meets international fair trial standards, and that international and independent monitors, as well as the relatives of all defendants are given access to the trial;
- Calling on them to take all necessary action to ensure the safety of the defendants, their relatives and lawyers;
- Reiterating that Azimzhan Askarov should not be in detention or facing trial but is a prisoner of conscience and should be immediately and unconditionally released.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 15 OCTOBER 2010 TO:

Minister of Internal Affairs
Kubatbek Baibolov
Frunze Street, 469
Bishkek 720040, KYRGYZSTAN
Fax: +996 312 68 20 44
Email: pressa@mail.mvd.kg
Salutation: Dear Minister

General Prosecutor
Baitemir Ibraev
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 of Kyrgyzstan accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the fourth update of UA 135/10 (EUR 58/003/2010). Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR58/003/2010/en>, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR58/005/2010/en>,
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR58/011/2010/en> and <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR58/013/2010/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

One of Azimzhan Askarov's lawyers, Nurbek Toktakunov, who had been harassed and attacked because of his work on the case, was not able to attend the trial hearing on 2 September because of the short notice given that the trial would be moved. Human rights activists said that Azimzhan Askarov was represented by a local lawyer.

Amnesty International believes that Azimzhan Askarov has been targeted for his legitimate activities as a human rights defender. He is the director of the human rights organization *Vozdukh* (Air) and he has been documenting police ill-treatment of detainees in the district of Bazar Korgan and other parts of the Jalal-Abad region for years. In June 2010, during the violence in south of Kyrgyzstan, Azimzhan Askarov filmed and photographed killings and arson attacks on mostly Uzbek homes and other buildings in Bazar Korgan, allegedly by groups of armed men and men in military uniforms claiming to be Kyrgyz.

He was detained on 15 June 2010 in Bazar Korgan on suspicion of "organizing mass disorder" and "inciting ethnic hatred" in connection with the death of one police officer during the violence that month. On 13 August he was charged with "attempting to participate in hostage taking," "storage of ammunition," "storage of extremist literature," "inciting ethnic hatred," "mass riots," "being an accomplice to premeditated murder" and "being an accomplice in the killing of a law enforcement officer." According to local human rights defenders, Azimzhan Askarov was subjected to prolonged beatings on the premises of the police station in Bazar Korgan to force him to hand over his film footage and confess to the murder of the police officer.

Further information on UA: 135/10 Index: EUR 58/014/2010 Issue Date: 03 September 2010

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