

URGENT ACTION

SATIRICAL BLOGGER ARRESTED FOR POST

Temirlan Ensebek is a blogger, author and creator of the satirical Instagram account Qaznews24. He was arrested on 17 January and charged under article 174 of Kazakhstan's Criminal Code on vague charges of "inciting interethnic discord" due to a post on the Qaznews24 Instagram account. His prosecution is politically motivated, targeting him for his activism and satirical publications, which have been critical of the Kazakhstani government.

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

*Head of the Almaty City Prosecutor's Office
Karipbekov Serik Akmyrzinovich
Zheltoksan Street, 189
Almaty
A15K0M9
Kazakhstan*

Dear Mr. Karipbekov

I am writing to express my deep concern over the prosecution of blogger Temirlan Ensebek. On 17 January, he was arrested and charged under Article 174 of Kazakhstan's Criminal Code on vague and politically motivated accusations of "inciting interethnic discord."

The charges stem from a January 2024 post on Qaznews24 that included the Kazakh song "Yo, Oryslar" ("Yo, Russians") in response to statements made by a Russian TV presenter. This song, whose creators remain unknown, has circulated for over twenty years and contains offensive lyrics. However, it was not banned by authorities until after Temirlan's detention — raising serious concerns about selective enforcement and politically motivated prosecution.

This is not the first time the Kazakhstani authorities have targeted Temirlan Ensebek for exercising his right to freedom expression, nor is it the first time Article 174 has been used to suppress dissent. Temirlan Ensebek's prosecution is an act of retaliation for his activism and a clear violation of the right to freedom of expression in Kazakhstan.

I urge you to:

Take all necessary steps to ensure Temirlan Ensebek's immediate and unconditional release, that all charges against him are dropped, and that his right to continue his activities without undue restrictions is guaranteed.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 17 January 2025 Temirlan Ensebek (also known as Ensebekov) — a blogger, creator, and author of the satirical online publication Qaznews24, as well as a featured case in the 2021 Write for Rights campaign — was detained by police near his home in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

He was charged under Article 174 of Kazakhstan's Criminal Code for “inciting interethnic discord” and placed in pre-trial detention for two months. The charge is based on a January 2024 post on Qaznews24 that included the Kazakh song “Yo, Oryslar” (“Yo, Russians”) in response to statements made by Russian media personality Tina Kandelaki, who claimed that the Russian language was being discriminated against in Kazakhstan. The song, whose creators remain unknown, has been in circulation for over twenty years and contains offensive lyrics. However, it was not banned by authorities until after Temirlan’s detention.

Kazakhstani, regional, and international human rights organizations, along with journalists and civil society initiatives, have condemned the case against Temirlan as politically motivated, aimed at punishing him for his continued criticism of the authorities through Qaznews24.

If convicted, Temirlan Ensebek faces a fine of 29 million tenge (approximately 57,000 USD), restrictions on his freedom, or imprisonment for a term of two to seven years.

This is not the first time he has faced criminal prosecution. In 2021, he was one of the Write for Rights campaign heroes after being targeted under Article 274 of Kazakhstan's Criminal Code for “distributing knowingly false information.” Officially Temirlan was a “Witness with the Right of Defence”, and was not restricted in his movements, but was legally obliged to return to his official place of residence in Almaty if summoned by police. . If charged, he risked a fine of €17,000, community service, up to three years of restricted liberty, or imprisonment.

His 2021 prosecution was also linked to Qaznews24, where he satirized official news, including government statements and those of the state-supported Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan. Despite a disclaimer stating that the content was satire, on May 15, 2021, police detained him, searched his home, and confiscated his phone, computer, and modem.

The pre-trial investigation against Temirlan Ensebek was officially closed on July 22, 2022, with official confirmation received on September 15 of that year.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Kazakh, Russian or English

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 10 September 2025

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

NAME AND PRONOUN: Temirlan Ensebek (he/him)