
International Partnership for Human Rights, Brussels, <http://www.iphronline.org> –
Human Rights Center “Citizens against Corruption,” Bishkek, <http://www.anticorruption.kg/>

Appeal to the International Community:

**Call for a New, Fair Review of the Case of Human Rights Defender
Sentenced to Life in Kyrgyzstan**

Brussels, Bishkek 16 September 2010. The International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR) and the Human Rights Center “Citizens against Corruption” (CAC) condemn the conviction of human rights defender Azimzhan Askarov and appeal to the international community to insist on a new, fair and impartial review of the case.

A court in the Nookan district of the Jalal-Abad region in southern Kyrgyzstan yesterday sentenced Askarov to lifetime imprisonment for his alleged role in violent events that took place in his home settlement Bazar Korgon in June and resulted in the death of a police officer. The court also ordered the confiscation of his property. He was found guilty under numerous articles of the Criminal Code of Kyrgyzstan, including participation in mass disturbances, incitement of ethnic hatred, and complicity in murder.

There are serious grounds to believe that the charges against Askarov are **politically motivated** and that he is being **punished for his human rights work**. Prior to being arrested Askarov was actively engaged in efforts to document looting, arson and violent attacks perpetrated during the inter-ethnic violence that engulfed southern Kyrgyzstan this summer. Among others, he filmed cases when police failed to intervene to stop violent acts. Previously he had been working for several years to monitor and report on prison conditions and police treatment of detainees.¹

There are also **serious concerns about the fairness** of the trial against Askarov and seven other individuals who were tried together with him and likewise given lengthy prison sentences. The defense lawyers were reportedly denied the opportunity to submit petitions or question witnesses. Moreover, the hearings were conducted in an **openly hateful atmosphere**, where relatives of the dead policeman shouted anti-Uzbek slurs and demands for execution against the defendants, and intimidated and attacked their lawyers and family members without an adequate response from the side of court officials or police present. At one hearing, Askarov and several other defendants showed visible signs of having been beaten, which reinforced earlier concerns that Askarov may have been subjected to torture in detention.²

The IPHR and the CAC urge the international community to **convey concerns** about the trial and conviction of Askarov to the interim authorities of Kyrgyzstan and to **insist** that the interim authorities take immediate and effective measures to ensure that:

- The charges against Azimzhan Askarov and his co-defendants are **reviewed in a new process conducted in full accordance with international standards** and requirements for

a fair trial at a place (outside southern Kyrgyzstan) where the **safety** of the defendants, their lawyers and relatives **can be guaranteed**;

- Askarov is **released** pending an outcome of this review;
- A thorough and independent **investigation** is undertaken **into the allegations** that Askarov has been **ill-treated and tortured** in detention.

¹ For more background information on the case, see IPHR and Citizens against Corruption, "Appeal to the EU: Help Ensure that Kyrgyz Human Rights Defender is Given Fair, Impartial and Safe Trial," 31 August 2010, <http://www.iphronline.org/news.html?30>

² See Frontline, "Update - Unfair trial and fear of torture of human rights defender Mr Azimjan Askarov," 13 September 2010, at <http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/node/13314>; Amnesty International, "Fair trial urged for ethnic Uzbeks accused of police killing in Kyrgyzstan," 7 September 2010, at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/fair-trial-urged-ethnic-uzbeks-accused-police-killing-kyrgyzstan-2010-09-07>