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KYRGYZSTAN RELEASE THE KEMPIR-ABAD DEFENDERS

A group of individuals have been arrested on charges related to their participation in peaceful protests in Kempir-Abad against a controversial new border agreement with Uzbekistan.

A number of them are under house arrest and others remain in pre-trial detention in poor conditions. Some of them have been charged with “attempting to violently overthrow the government”, which carries a sentence of up to 15 years in prison.

The Kyrgyz government has an obligation to respect and facilitate the right to peaceful assembly and ensure that any restriction is necessary and proportionate to a legitimate aim. Criminalizing individuals simply for taking part in peaceful protests is a violation of human rights.

Write to the President of Kyrgyzstan urging him to:

- Ensure that all charges against the defendants that stem solely from their exercise of the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly are dropped.
- Guarantee that those who are under any form of detention are immediately released.

Write to:

Sadyr Japarov
President of Kyrgyzstan
Presidential Administration
205 Chuy Prospect
Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
Email: pisma@mail.gov.kg , oip@adm.gov.kg

And copy:

Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic
2360 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, D.C., DC 20008
United States of America
Email: kgembassy.usa@mfa.gov.kg

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

More than 20 peaceful protestors were arrested in October 2022 in connection to a controversy about a land-swap involving the Kempir-Abad reservoir. There are currently 27 individuals in pre-trial detention or under house arrest in connection with this case.

The arrests came after a group of politicians and activists formed the “Kempir-Abad Defence Committee” to protest the lack of consultation over a new border demarcation agreement with Uzbekistan. The agreement would cede control of the Kempir-Abad (Andizhan) fresh-water reservoir to Uzbekistan in exchange for agricultural land.

The authorities arrested multiple members of the committee and others connected to them in October 2022 and during subsequent weeks. The defendants were transferred to detention centers, and some were not allowed access to their lawyers.

Seven defendants are being held in the Bishkek pre-trial detention center (SIZO No.1). They have complained about the inhumane conditions of detention. They do not have access to proper water and sanitation, room for exercise, necessary medical treatment and family visits. These defendants are:

1. Rita Karasartova, a human rights activist and head of the non-governmental Institute for Public Analysis. She is also a member of the United Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan.
2. Ali Shabdan, an activist who joined the Reform party, led by Klara Sooronkulova.
3. Erlan Bekchoroev, an activist and member of the Turan Democratic Party.
4. Zhenish Moldokmatov, an activist and leader of the Turan Democratic Party.
5. Aidanbek Akmatov, a journalist who worked at the BBC and Azattyk Radio (RFE/RL).
6. Atay Beyshenbek, a blogger and activist.
7. Marat Bayazov, an activist, business consultant, and a member of the United Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan.

Five other defendants have been placed under house arrest, including:

1. Asiya Sasykbayeva, a human rights activist and former Member of Parliament.
2. Klara Sooronkulova, a member of the United Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan.
3. Gulnara Dzhurabaeva, an activist and former Central Electoral Commission member.
4. Perizat Suranova, an activist who managed various international projects, including "Women's Rights to Land" (UNIFEM project) and stood for election as a member of parliament in 2021.
5. Ulugbek Mamatayev, a politician and an activist who stood for election in 2020 and 2021.

The United Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan is an opposition movement formed in March 2022 by a group of activists and human rights defenders, some of whom have been involved in the protests. Among their goals, the movement is working for the restoration of democratic institutions, the creation of a fair justice system, the development of anti-crisis economic measures and the fight against poverty.