

**Press release**

**Kyrgyzstan**

**Rise in criminal cases against members of political parties**

Paris, Bishkek – March 2, 2009 - The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and its member organisation the Kyrgyz Committee for Human Rights (KCHR) are concerned about the recent rise in criminal cases against members of political opposition parties and their relatives in Kyrgyzstan. FIDH and KCHR fear that these cases illustrate the tendency of the Kyrgyz authorities to repress members of the opposition in its attempts to muzzle and compromise critical voices to the regime.

On February 7, 2009, around 20 policemen put the house of opposition leader **Mr. Azimbek Beknazarov** under siege. The police was searching for his son Mr. **Ernest Beknazarov**, who was not home at the time. They arrested Mr. A. Beknazarov and brought him to Bishkek police station for questioning before releasing him. On February 9, 2009, Mr. A. Beknazarov was called to the 9<sup>th</sup> department of the police in Bishkek and questioned for a few hours on the whereabouts of his son. According to his lawyer Sapar Zhaychibaev, Mr. Ernest Beknazarov was charged on January 9, 2009, under article 166-3-2 of the Kyrgyz Criminal Code (fraud) by his business partner Temirbek Selipiev (T. Selipiev and E. Baknazarov jointly run a company selling imported cars). Until the police raid of February 7, 2009, neither Mr. E. Beknazarov nor his lawyer or family were informed of the case. Up to this day, the police has not been able to locate Mr. E. Beknazarov.

Mr. A. Beknazarov believes that the charges brought against his son are linked to his own political activities and are fabricated. A former member of parliament, Mr. A. Beknazarov was already arrested in 2002 after criticizing former president Akaev<sup>1</sup>. After the Tulip Revolution in 2005, he served as general prosecutor for six months. In January 2009 Mr. A. Beknazarov became the chief of the « United Popular Movement » (BEK - « Birikken El Kiyimyl »), a new political coalition created through the alliance of main Kyrgyz opposition parties in December 2008.

On December 30, 2008, **Mr. Ismail Isakov**, leader of opposition party « Zhany Kyrgyzstan » and a sharp critic of the President party and policies, was notified that the State Office of the Public Prosecutor had initiated a criminal case against him and that he was barred from leaving the country. The Public Prosecutor accuse him of selling military devices from the Balykchynsky garrison and of misusing public funds when in office.

Mr. I. Isakov claims that the charges against him are politically motivated, as they were brought soon after he decided to join the new alliance of opposition parties « BEK ». Mr. I. Isakov held the post of Minister of Defence from 2005 until he resigned in October 2008.

On February 11, 2009, the Pervomaysky district court in Bishkek examined the criminal charges brought against **Mr. Erkin Bulekbaev**, leader of the opposition Green party of Kyrgyzstan, who is accused of insulting the honour and dignity of the President. The criminal charges are based on satiric cartoons depicting President Kurmanbek Bakiev that supposedly hung on the walls of the party's office and were allegedly confiscated during an unwarranted search of the party's office conducted by officials of the State Committee of national safety (SCNS) on December 13, 2009.

Mr. E. Bulekbaev denies the charges. The Green party admits that their office contained satirical

<sup>1</sup> see <http://www.fidh.org/spip.php?article1791>

images, but insists that none of them depicted the President.

On February 9, 2009, **Mr. Taalaybek Mederkulov**, a member of the town assembly of Balykchy (district of Issyk-Kul) was arrested on charges of abusing his powers as a public official (apparently for breaking tender rules) and was placed under provisional detention. Fellow-members of the town assembly have petitioned the prosecutor to resort to alternative sanctions and release their colleague. Mr. A. Dzhenkshenkulov believes that the sole reason for arresting his relative is to pressure and discredit him because of his activities in the opposition. Mr. T. Mederkulov is the brother of **Mr. Alikbek Dzhekshenkulov**, a former minister of Foreign Affairs and present coordinator of the « For Justice » opposition party, now part of the united opposition coalition « BEK ». **Bekkul Dzhenkshenkulov**, the son of Alikbek Dzhenkshenkulov, left the country after being charged of hooliganism under article 234 of the Criminal Code two months ago.

FIDH and KCHR call the Kyrgyz authorities to respect their obligations and to comply with the relevant international norms and standards, notably:

- Put an immediate end to all forms of harassment of activists from political parties and their relatives;
- Respect the right of individuals and groups to establish, in full freedom, their own political parties or other political organisations, in conformity with paragraph 7.6 of the Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE;
- Protect the right of every citizen to take part in the conduct of public affairs, in accordance with article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- Guarantee the independence of the judiciary and the right to defense, in accordance with Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

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