

17 December 2018

Kazakhstan: Human rights defenders, including Galym Ageleuov, interrogated

On 16 December 2018, at least 15 human rights defenders and journalists from different cities in Kazakhstan were brought to police stations in a coordinated operation, interrogated and released with no charges filed. The interrogations continued on 17 December and prevented the human rights defenders from participating in a planned protest on 16 December. One of the human rights defenders is **Galym Ageleuov**, who was detained in Almaty.

Galym Ageleuov is the director of the human rights organisation **Liberty**, which was closely following court proceedings related to the events in Zhanaozen in 2011, when a violent suppression of protests resulted in at least 15 deaths, hundreds of people injured and numerous legal cases opened against protesters. The human rights defender met with victims, organised and participated in press conferences and provided information on the court proceedings using social media.

On 16 December 2018, Galym Ageleuov was taken by police officers to the police station as a witness in the case against the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DCK), an organisation which was declared extremist and banned by Kazakh authorities. The human rights defender was then questioned about his attitude towards the Kazakh government, the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan and the current President. The officers forced Galym Ageleuov to unlock his phone and show all chats, threatening to confiscate it if he didn't comply. After no trace of the human rights defender's involvement with the DCK was found, he was released.

Apart from Galym Ageleuov, at least 15 other human rights defenders, journalists and human rights activists were brought to police departments in a number of cities of Kazakhstan. They were interrogated, had their phones checked and were released without charge. Afraid to be detained, some of the activists and human rights defenders were not able to leave their houses as police cars were parked outside. Interrogations continued throughout 17 December. These measures were aimed at preventing activists from participating in protests held on 16 December, and called by the DCK. The demonstrations in solidarity with the victims of violent protest suppression are held annually on December 16, the Independence Day of Kazakhstan. This day was marked twice by brutal dispersion by the Kazakh authorities in Almaty in 1986, and in Zhanaozen in 2011.

Front Line Defenders believes that the interrogation of Galym Ageleuov as well as of other human rights defenders, is part of the tactic applied by the Kazakh authorities in order to intimidate human rights defenders and activists and, consequently, prevent them from holding peaceful demonstrations in solidarity with the victims of state violence in Almaty and Zhanaozen.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities of Kazakhstan to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally cease all forms intimidation or harassment against Galym Ageleuov and other human rights defenders, as it is believed that these measures are not only solely related to their legitimate human rights activities but, furthermore, constitute a direct violation of their rights;
2. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Kazakhstan are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.