

22 July 2020

Kyrgyzstan: Azimjan Askarov health in critical condition

On 22 July 2020, **Azimjan Askarov's** lawyer Valeryan Vakhitov visited the human rights defender in prison and reported that his health had deteriorated significantly.

According to his lawyer, [Azimjan Askarov](#) was unable to walk himself and had to be supported by prison guards when walking. The defender has reportedly lost a lot of weight and as he can barely eat, has been receiving glucose injections. Valeryan Vakhitov noticed whilst visiting that the defender looked particularly pale, was coughing a lot and could barely speak, and was told by medical personnel that he had been sick for approximately 10 days. After seeing the critical condition Azimjan Askarov was in, his lawyer filed two written requests to the management of the prison for the medical files for the defender from the prison doctor in order to find out what kind of medical attention he has been receiving.

On 16 July, representatives from the office of the Ombudsman visited Azimjan Askarov in prison. They reported that they had taken defender's blood pressure and temperature and that they were not concerned, despite the defender telling them that he had a high temperature for several days, and was feeling achy, had no appetite and had trouble swallowing. The representatives also reported that Azimjan Askarov was receiving glucose injections, vitamin supplements and treatment for his fever.

According to the management of the prison, prisoners are not tested for COVID-19 as "the convicts practically do not contact anyone", with the head of the prisoner's medical unit adding that the prison did not have the equipment to test prisoners, nor do they have sufficient medication. Samat Kalykov, press secretary for the State service for the execution of sentences, publicly denied the information regarding Azimjan Askarov's deteriorating health, saying that the defender was fine.

Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned by the deteriorating health condition of Azimjan Askarov and the inaction of prison authorities to effectively respond and treat him. It is particularly concerned in the context of COVID-19, given the defender's age and the fact that his health has already significantly deteriorated in the 10 years that he has spent imprisoned, subjected to inhumane conditions and cruel treatment.

Front Line Defenders reiterates its [repeated calls](#) for the immediate release of Azimjan Askarov in accordance with the UN Human Rights Committee's [decision](#) which found that the Kyrgyz authorities had "arbitrarily detained, held in inhumane conditions, tortured and mistreated, and prevented [Askarov] from adequately preparing his trial defence." Front Line Defenders urges Kyrgyzstan to quash his conviction, immediately release the human rights defender and provide him with the medical treatment he critically needs.