

12 January 2022

## **Kazakhstan: Journalist and human rights defender Lukpan Akhmedyarov sentenced to ten days of administrative detention**

On 7 January 2022, journalist and human rights defender **Lukpan Akhmedyarov** was detained upon leaving the editorial office of the “Uralsk Week” in Uralsk, Kazakhstan. Later the same day, he was sentenced to ten days of administrative arrest for participation in an unsanctioned demonstration. According to his lawyer, Mereke Gabdualiev, the human rights defender was present at the demonstration in his journalistic capacity, but the court refused to take this into account. On 10 January 2022, the court upheld the decision despite the appeal by Lukpan Akhmedyarov’ lawyer to his detention.

[Lukpan Akhmedyarov](#) is a prominent Kazakh journalist, human rights defender and former editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Uralskaya Nedelya* (Uralsk Week). He has held several civil campaigns in defense of fundamental rights and freedoms. The authorities have repeatedly subjected Lukpan Akhmedyarov to unlawful arrests and detentions for his human rights work. In 2012, he received the Peter Mackler Award by the international human rights organization *Reporters Without Borders* for his civil courage and protection of the principles of independent journalism.

Lukpan Akhmedyarov’s detention follows several cases of judicial harassment against human rights defenders and journalists by the law enforcement officers since the beginning of the mass protests in Kazakhstan on 2 January 2022. On 4 January 2022, journalists of *Azattyk* radio and human rights defenders **Darkhan Omirbek**, **Kasym Amanzholov**, **Aizhan Auelbekova** were detained and released later on. On 9 January 2022, police officers searched the apartment and questioned freelance journalist Ardak Erubaeva, working for digital media outlet Orda.kz.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the detention of and accusations made against human rights defender Lukpan Akhmedyarov. It condemns the judicial prosecution of human rights defenders and journalists carrying out their professional work to cover the protests in Kazakhstan. Front Line Defender believes that these actions are detrimental for the work of human rights defenders and journalists in Kazakhstan, as they undermine the access to free and independent press and limit the freedom of speech and expression.

### **Front Line Defenders urges Kazakh authorities to:**

1. Take all necessary measures to ensure the immediate and unconditional release of human rights defender Lukpan Akhmedyarov, as it is believed that the charges are solely motivated by his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Immediately stop the judicial prosecution and harassment of Lukpan Akhmedyarov and other journalists and human rights defenders covering the protests in Kazakhstan, as well as guarantee their physical and psychological security and integrity;

3. Cease the practice of using the word "terrorism" against civil society activists, human rights defenders and journalists in reprisal for their legitimate human rights work and practicing their profession;
4. 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.

Front Line Defenders respectfully reminds you that the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998, recognises the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders, their right to freedom of association and to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals. We would particularly draw attention to Article 6 (b): *"Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others: (b) As provided for in human rights and other applicable international instruments, freely to publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and knowledge on all human rights and fundamental freedoms"*, and to Article 12 (2): *"The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present declaration."*

Please inform us of any actions that may be taken with regard to the above case.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Anderson  
Executive Director