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## **Kazakhstan: Human rights defender and journalist Lukpan Akhmedyarov sentenced for 15 days of administrative arrest**

On 12 April 2023, human rights defender and journalist **Lukpan Akhmedyarov** was detained and sentenced to 15 days of administrative detention. Law enforcement officers stopped Lukpan Akhmedyarov's car on the road, and informed him that he was being detained for violating the rules on public protest, an administrative offence envisioned by Article 488, part 7, of the Civic Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan. On the same day he was sentenced to 15 days administrative detention.

[Lukpan Akhmedyarov](#) is a Kazakh human rights defender, journalist and former editor-in-chief of the newspaper Uralskaya Nedelya (Uralsk Week). Currently he works on his own YouTube project "Just Journalism," where he covers human rights violations in Kazakhstan. The human rights defender has conducted several civil campaigns in defence 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 organisation Reporters Without Borders for his civil courage and protection of the principles of independent journalism.

On 12 April 2023, on his personal Instagram account, Lukpan Akhmedyarov broadcasted a live video, which showed at least two local law enforcement representatives, accompanied by at least three representatives of Security Service Personnel of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Their faces were covered with black masks as they approached his car trying to force the human rights defender out. In the video Lukpan Akhmedyarov stated that he also noticed security service personnel in front of his house in Uralsk. The law enforcement officers then stated that on 9 April 2023, Lukpan Akhmedyarov participated in a protest that was not sanctioned by the authorities, where he called out restrictions on freedom of speech. The authorities cited his participation in this protest as the reason for his detention, stating that the human rights defender violated Article 488, part 7 of the Civic Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as he "organised and (or) held a meeting, rally, demonstration, march, picket or other public events held in violation of the procedure established by the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the procedure for organising and holding peaceful assemblies, if these actions do not have signs of a criminally punishable act."

Lupan Alhmedyarov has stated that his detention and arrest were related to his publicly announced intention to visit Zhanaozen and report on the situation in the city, where oil workers are protesting their labor conditions and the recent detention of their colleagues in Astana. The Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan has been trying to silence the coverage of the protests by oil workers in Zhanaozen and in Astana; some journalists covering the protests in Astana were detained, and there are reports of internet shutdowns in Zhanaozen.

Front Line Defenders condemns the judicial harrasment of human rights defender and journalist Lukpan Akhmedyarov for his legitimate and peaceful human rights work. Front Line Defenders expresses serious concerns about a pattern of targetting human rights journalists with arrests and detentions in order to prevent them from covering human rights violations. Systemic attacks against independent human rights journalists negatively impact the development of civil society in Kazakhstan.

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**Front Line Defenders urges the authorities of Kazakhstan to:**

1. Immediately release human rights defender and journalist Lukpan Akhmedyarov from detention and ensure his physical and psychological integrity;
2. Cease all persecution of Lukpan Akhmedyarov for his legitimate and peaceful human rights work;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in the Republic of Kazakhstan can carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, in line with the Republic of Kazakhstan's international human rights obligations and commitments.