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Crimea (Ukraine): Abdureshit Dzhepparov facing new administrative charges in Russian-occupied Crimea and organisation which he co-founded stopped its work online

On 13 June 2023, the hearing on the administrative case against human rights defender **Abdureshit Dzhepparov** began in the Kyivskiy District Court in Simferopol in Russian-occupied Crimea. The human rights defender is being charged for "discrediting the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation" due to allegedly administrating the social media pages of the human rights initiative "Qirim Gayesi" (Crimean Idea), which he denies. This is one of the two administrative cases being brought against the human rights defender at this time, the second being related to the alleged "abuse of freedom of the mass media."

[Abdureshit Dzhepparov](#) is a human rights defender and activist of the Crimean Tatar National Movement working to raise awareness about Crimean Tatars as an indigenous community and standing up for the community's right to return to their homeland after the 1944 Deportation by Joseph Stalin's regime. Since the illegal occupation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014, Abdureshit Dzhepparov has coordinated the Crimean Contact Group on Human Rights, dealing with enforced disappearances in the Russian-occupied peninsula. Abdureshit Dzhepparov is one of the co-founders of the human rights organisation Crimean Solidarity and several other initiatives, including "Qirim Gayesi". In 2020 he was [nominated](#) for the Nobel Peace Prize.

"Qirim Gayesi" is human rights organisation which monitors and publishes overviews of violations of international humanitarian law in Crimea and news on human rights violations in the peninsula.

The charges against Abdureshit Dzhepparov, which were considered by the court, were related to a post on the "Qirim Gayesi" Facebook page on 3 March 2023. The post discussed the transfer of civilian hostages from other Russian-occupied territories to Crimea and their incommunicado detention, as well as the illegal forced transfer of children from an orphanage in the formerly Russia-occupied Kherson region of Ukraine to Crimea. The post referred to Russia as the "occupying power." The Prosecutor stated that with these posts, the human rights defender committed the administrative offence of so-called "discrediting the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation," envisioned by Article 20.3.3 of the Russian Code of Administrative Offences.

During the hearing, the court established that Russian law enforcement officers reviewed the Facebook page of "Qirim Gayesi" after they raided Abdureshit Dzhepparov's house on 25 April 2023. After this raid, the human rights defender was [sentenced](#) to 12 days of administrative detention for "resisting a lawful order of the police," for allegedly obstructing the seizure of his laptop during the search.

Abdureshit Dzhepparov acknowledged that he was one of the founders of "Qirim Gayesi" but denied that he ever administered their Facebook page. This was backed up by the fact that the page published new posts during his administrative arrest in April and May 2023. The human rights organisation Crimean Solidarity [reported](#) that the court agreed to interview the witness during the next hearing, which is scheduled for 26 June 2023.

On 12 June 2023, the day before the beginning of Abdurehit Dzepparov's hearing, "Qirim Gayesi" issued a [statement](#) that the initiative is stopping its work online and that its Facebook page will be deleted to express solidarity with Abdureshit Dzhepparov and to support him during the trial. "Our

team faced a difficult choice: to continue telling the truth about repression and human rights violations in Crimea, but expose human rights activist Abdureshit Dzhepparov to significant risks, or do everything in our power to deflect this threat,” the statement reads.

The other administrative charge against Abdureshit Dzhepparov concerns alleged “abuse of freedom of the mass media,” an offence envisioned by part 9 of Article 13.15 of the Russian Code of Administrative Offences. These charges refer to posts by “Qirim Gayesi” about the sounds of explosions near the city of Feodosia on 8 April 2023 and the forced conscription of Crimean Tatars by the occupying authorities. The trial for those charges is scheduled to take place on 4 July 2023.

This is not the first time the Russian de-facto authorities in Crimea have targeted Abdureshit Dzhepparov for his human rights work. On 25 April 2023, at approximately 7 am, the human rights defender’s family home in Bilohirsk was [raided](#) by unknown armed individuals in Russian military uniforms, after which they took the human rights defender to an unknown location. Later, the human rights defender, having no access to his lawyer, was charged with “resisting a lawful order of the police,” for allegedly obstructing the seizure of his laptop during the search, and was placed under administrative arrest for [12 days](#). The human rights defender’s house was also raided in March 2022, after which he was detained for 15 days for [reposting](#) a video which allegedly displayed Nazi symbols on his social media page in 2019, violating Article 20.3 of the Russian Code of Administrative Offences. On 27 September 2014, Abdureshit Dzhepparov’s son, Islyam Dzhepparov, and his nephew, Dzhevdet Islyamov, were forcibly disappeared near the Crimean Tatar village of Sary-Su in the Bilohirsk district, and have been missing ever since.

There has been a pattern of targeting human rights defenders, such as Abdureshit Dzhepparov, for their legitimate and non-violent human rights work in Russian-occupied Crimea since its occupation in 2014. This has contributed to a shrinking space for freedom of expression with a chilling effect on civil society in Crimea and particularly on its indigenous community of Crimean Tatars. The targeting of the human rights defender takes place in the context of Pre-Trial Chamber II of the International Criminal Court’s investigation into the alleged war crime of unlawful deportation of population (children) and unlawful transfer of population (children) from occupied areas of Ukraine. On 17 March 2023, the Court [issued an arrest warrant](#) for the president of Russia Vladimir Putin and Russian children ombudsman Maria Lvova-Belova.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the continued judicial harassment of the human rights defender Abdureshit Dzhepparov, which led to the human rights initiative “Qirim Gayesi” radically limiting their online presence and human rights protection work. Front Line Defenders considers that the threats against the human rights defender and indigenous Crimean Tatars are in reprisal against their peaceful and legitimate human rights work. Front Line Defenders believes that the expansion of the Russian Federation’s Administrative and Criminal Codes with a set of articles against “discreditation” and “fakes” against the Russian military fosters censorship in the country and is being disproportionately used to target human rights defenders and journalists, including those in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities of the Russian Federation to:

1. Cease all persecution and targeting of human rights defender Abdureshit Dzhepparov for his legitimate and peaceful human rights work;
2. Cease the targeting of human rights organization “Qirim Gayesi” for its legitimate and non-violent work;
3. Repeal the recently-introduced articles of the Russian Criminal Code and the Code of Administrative Offences that are designed to target so-called “discreditation” and “fakes” against the actions of the Russian military;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in the territory under de-

facto control of the Russian Federation are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities and exercise their human rights, in particular freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, without fear of reprisals and free from all restrictions.