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Uzbekistan: Human rights defender **Dauletmurat Tajimuratov** sentenced to remain in prison for sixteen years

On 5 June 2023, the Higher Court of Uzbekistan upheld the decision of the Bukhara Regional Court to sentence human rights defender and lawyer **Dauletmurat Tajimuratov** to sixteen years in prison. The human rights defender was tried along with twenty-two other Karakalpak protesters and his was the only sentence that remained unchanged after the appeals trial. Dauletmurat Tajimuratov will spend the first two years of his sentence in prison and the remaining years in a high-security penal colony.

[Dauletmurat Tajimuratov](#) is a Karakalpak human rights defender and lawyer. He is a prominent community leader in the Independent Republic of Karakalpakstan. He worked as an editor at a newspaper named *El Khyzmetinde* (In the Service of the People). Dauletmurat Tajimuratov's human rights work includes protection of the rights of the Karakalpak national minority in Uzbekistan. He was one of the leaders of the peaceful protests in Nukus in 2022 aimed at protecting Karakalpakstan's status as an independent republic.

On 5 June 2023, the Higher Court of Uzbekistan considered the appeal of Dauletmurat Tajimuratov's sentence. He appealed the 31 January 2023 decision of the Bukhara Regional Court to sentence him to sixteen years in prison. The Bukhara Court found the human rights defender guilty of the following charges as stipulated by the Criminal Code of Uzbekistan: conspiracy to seize power or overthrow the constitutional order of the Republic of Uzbekistan (part 4, Article 159); theft by misappropriation or embezzlement (part 3A, Article 167); legalisation of proceeds from criminal activity (Article 243); organisation of riots accompanied by violence (part 3, Article 244); production, storage, distribution or demonstration of materials containing a threat to public safety and public order (paragraphs a, b and d of Article 244-1). The human rights defender's appeal of this sentence was rejected.

In April 2023, coming up to the appeal, Dauletmurat Tajimuratov's lawyer Sergey Mayorov called upon the authorities of Uzbekistan to stop the politically motivated persecution of his client. Sergey Mayorov stated that the conditions in the pre-trial detention centre No.11 in Urgench, in the Khorezm region, in which the human rights defender is detained, are unbearable as he is exposed to physical and psychological harassment by the detention facility officers. He reported that the human rights defender Dauletmurat Tajimuratov has been subjected to beatings and had his head forcibly shaven and the facility officers have forced other detainees to intimidate and harass him. His lawyer Sergey Mayorov also mentioned that the human rights defender Dauletmurat Tajimuratov received an old, torn mattress with no padding, a terrible-smelling pillow and sheets of horrible quality, calling the conditions of the pre-trial detention centre unbearable and inhumane.

On 1 July 2022, the human rights defender Dauletmurat Tajimuratov [was abducted](#) by Uzbekistani law enforcement officers from his house in Nukus in the Autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan. The human rights defender was targeted as he called upon the people of Karakalpakstan through his personal blog to peacefully gather in front of the local administration building on 5 July 2022 to protest the recently introduced constitutional amendments on Karakalpakstan's independence. The protest was sanctioned by the Chairman of the Parliament of the Republic of Karakalpakstan. The Uzbekistani authorities detained the human rights defender for a few hours, [beat and threatened](#) him and released him shortly after, allegedly due to the public outcry in Nukus. After Dauletmurat

Tajimuratov publicly announced the violence against him through his blog on the same day of 1 July 2022, he was detained once again by the Uzbekistani National Security Service.

Front Line Defenders condemns the sentencing of human rights defender and lawyer Dauletmurat Tajimuratov as it believes it is in reprisal against his peaceful and legitimate human rights work. Front Line Defenders believes that the fact that Dauletmurat Tajimuratov's sentence is the only one of twenty-three that remained unchanged following his appeal evidences a retaliation against the human rights defender's work as a community leader and his calls for a peaceful protest.

Front Line Defenders calls upon the authorities of Uzbekistan to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release human rights defender and lawyer Dauletmurat Tajimuratov;
2. Cease persecution of Dauletmurat Tajimuratov for his legitimate and non-violent human rights work;
3. Ensure Dauletmurat Tajimuratov's physical and psychological integrity, including his right to freedom from torture and other forms of inhumane treatment;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Uzbekistan are able to carry out their human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, in line with Uzbekistan's international human rights obligations and commitments.