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Uzbekistan: Human rights defender from Kazakhstan Galym Agleulov barred from entering Uzbekistan

On 22 May 2023, Kazakhstani human rights defender **Galym Agleulov** was barred from entering Uzbekistan. The human rights defender was travelling to Tashkent to participate as an observer in the upcoming appeal hearing in the Higher Court of Uzbekistan of the 22 protesters detained in the Karakalpakstan Autonomous Republic in Uzbekistan in July 2022. The court hearing was scheduled for 23 May 2023.

[Galym Ageleuov](#) is a human rights defender and the head of the human rights organisation Liberty. Throughout his work with Liberty, Galym documented mass executions and other human rights violations during the 2011 labour protests in Zhanaozen. Within the Freedom for Euraisa project, he has documented violations committed by Uzbekistani authorities when suppressing protests in the Karakalpakstan Autonomous Republic.

On 22 May 2023, the human rights defender Galym Agleulov was travelling from Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan to Tashkent, Uzbekistan, to attend the upcoming appeal hearing of the protesters detained in the Karakalpakstan Autonomous Republic in Uzbekistan in July 2022 at the Higher Court of Uzbekistan. The human rights defender was prohibited from boarding flight HY-778, operated by Uzbekistan Airways. Members of the airport staff informed Galym Agleulov that he had been prohibited from boarding the flight because the Uzbekistani Department of Border Control had informed the airline that the human right defender was barred from entering the country.

Galym Agleulov has visited Uzbekistan twice since the summer 2022 protests in the Karakalpakstan Autonomous Republic, both for the purposes of monitoring human rights violations and unlawful detentions, and for the mistrials of the Karakalpak protesters. On this occasion, Galym Agleulov aimed to visit Uzbekistan to attend the appeal hearing of human rights defender Dauletmurat Tajimuratov. In January 2023, after his arbitrary detention in July 2022 in Nukus, Dauletmurat Tajimuratov was accused of seizure of power and organising violent protests and [sentenced](#) by Bukhara Regional Court to 16 years in prison. In April 2023, Dauletmurat Tajimuratov's lawyer, human rights defender Sergey Mayorov, [reported](#) that his client was tortured in custody.

In June 2022, the President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, introduced constitutional amendments that aimed to remove Karakalpakstan's status as an autonomous republic. In response to these amendments, peaceful protests were organised in Karakalpakstan. One of the leaders of the peaceful protests, human rights defender and blogger Dauletmurat Tadjimuratov, was arbitrarily detained and the Uzbekistani authorities started to use force to suppress the civil unrest. The authorities implemented an internet shutdown and utilised forceful measures, including water cannons, rubber bullets, stun grenades and tear gas, to disperse the protesters. At least 21 people died during the protests. [In March 2023](#), thirty nine Karakalpak activists accused of taking part in the protests in Nukus were convicted and twenty eight of them were sentenced to prison terms of between five and eleven years, while eleven defendants were handed parole-like sentences. Twenty two protesters, including human rights defender Dauletmurat Tajimuratov, appealed the decision of the Bukhara Regional Court.

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Front Line Defenders condemns the decision of the Uzbekistani authorities to bar human rights defender Galym Agleulov from entering the country to carry out his peaceful human rights work. Front Line Defenders underscores the utmost importance of international observers to trials against human rights defenders, who are targeted for their peaceful and non-violent human rights work. Limiting the participation of international trial observers contributes to shrinking civic space in Uzbekistan and fosters a lack of accountability.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Uzbekistan to:

1. Lift the travel ban on Kazakhstani human rights defender Galym Agleulov, and ensure that he can carry out his human rights work as an international trial observer;
2. Ensure and encourage participation of human rights defenders as independent and impartial trial observers;
3. Cease using travel bans against human rights defenders performing their legitimate and non-violent human rights work in Uzbekistan;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in the 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.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Kazakhstan to:

1. Engage in a dialogue with the authorities of Uzbekistan concerning their barring of human rights defender Galym Agleulov from entering Uzbekistan;
2. Ensure and encourage participation of Kazakhstani human rights defenders as independent and impartial trial observers both domestically and internationally;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in the Kazakhstan are able to carry out their human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, in line with Kazakhstan's international human rights obligations and commitments.