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KAZAKHSTAN

SATIRICAL BLOGGER ARRESTED FOR SOCIAL MEDIA POST

Blogger and author Temirlan Ensebek, known for creating the satirical Instagram account Qaznews24, was arrested on January 17. Authorities charged him under Article 174 of Kazakhstan's Criminal Code with "inciting interethnic discord," a vague and broadly applied accusation.

His arrest is politically motivated, targeting him for his activism and satirical posts that criticize the Kazakhstani government.

Write to the Head of the Almaty City Prosecutor's Office urging the authorities to:

- Ensure Temirlan Ensebek's immediate and unconditional release.
- Drop all charges against him.
- Guarantee his right to continue his activities without undue restrictions.

Write to:

Head of the Almaty City Prosecutor's Office
Karipbekov Serik Akmyrzinovich
Zheltoksan Street, 189
Almaty, A15K0M9
Kazakhstan
Salutation: Dear Mr. Karipbekov,

And copy:

His Excellency Dauletbek Kussainov
Ambassador
Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan
150 Metcalfe Street, Suite 700, 701, 702
Ottawa, ON K2P 1P1
Tel: (613) 695-8623 Fax: (613) 695-8755
Email: ottawa@mfa.kz

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On January 17, 2025, police detained blogger and author Temirlan Ensebek near his home in Almaty, Kazakhstan. He is the creator of the satirical online publication Qaznews24 and was previously featured in the 2021 Write for Rights campaign. Authorities charged him under Article 174 of Kazakhstan's Criminal Code for "inciting interethnic discord" and placed him in pre-trial detention for two months.

The charge stems from a Qaznews24 post in January 2024 that included the Kazakh song Yo, Oryslar (Yo, Russians). The post was a response to statements by Russian media personality Tina Kandelaki, who claimed the Russian language was being discriminated against in Kazakhstan. The song, in circulation for over 20 years, contains offensive lyrics but was not officially banned until after Temirlan's arrest.

Kazakhstani, regional, and international human rights organizations, along with journalists and civil society groups, have condemned the charges as politically motivated. They argue that authorities are punishing Temirlan for his continued criticism of the government through Qaznews24.

If convicted, he faces a fine of 29 million tenge (about 57,000 USD), restrictions on his freedom, or a prison sentence of two to seven years.

This is not the first time authorities have targeted Temirlan. In 2021, he was a focus of the Write for Rights campaign after facing charges under Article 274 of Kazakhstan's Criminal Code for "distributing knowingly false information." Although classified as a "Witness with the Right of Defense," he was legally required to return to Almaty if summoned by police. If charged, he could have faced a fine of €17,000 (26, 570 CAD), community service, restricted liberty, or up to three years in prison.

His 2021 case was also linked to Qaznews24, where he satirized official news and government statements. Despite a disclaimer identifying the content as satire, authorities detained him on May 15, 2021. They searched his home and confiscated his phone, computer, and modem. The pre-trial investigation ended on July 22, 2022, with official confirmation received on September 15 of that year.

Please take action as soon as possible until September 10, 2025. The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.