



Adoption of the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Kyrgyzstan
Item 6 – UN Human Rights Council
September 2020

We cannot underscore enough our deep sadness and dismay that the Kyrgyz government took no action on Finland’s recommendation and Ireland’s statement to release the human rights defender Azimjon Askarov from prison. Instead authorities denied him adequate medical care and left him to die in custody on July 25, 2020.

Since 2016, when the UN Human Rights Committee issued its decision finding that Askarov had been arbitrarily detained and tortured, and called for his release, the Kyrgyz government has cynically ignored its international human rights obligations in Askarov’s case. Kyrgyz authorities bear full responsibility for his death.

We take this opportunity to again call on Kyrgyzstan to ensure a credible, independent investigation into Askarov’s wrongful imprisonment and death, provide his family with a remedy, including compensation, and his legal rehabilitation.

Although Kyrgyzstan supported recommendations during this UPR cycle related to combating violence against women and domestic violence, the reality is that in Kyrgyzstan, impunity for domestic violence is still the norm. Authorities should commit to enforcing legislation that provides protective measures for women and girls and hold perpetrators accountable to the full extent of the law.

Despite Kyrgyzstan’s support for recommendations concerning freedom of speech and non-governmental organizations, a number of worrying developments have taken place since Kyrgyzstan’s UPR debate. The Kyrgyz parliament advanced an anti-NGO bill that would impose unjustified and unnecessary financial reporting requirements on civil society groups that will only hamper their work. Authorities brought a dubious criminal case against human rights defender Kamil Ruziev, and detained dozens of peaceful protesters on International Women’s Day. Parliament also adopted a draft law on manipulating information that would allow the authorities, without judicial oversight, to order the removal of information officials considered “false” or “inaccurate” from internet platforms. Kyrgyz authorities should ensure in practice that journalists and activists can work without undue interference or retaliation by the authorities.

Disappointingly, Kyrgyzstan did not support Spain’s recommendation to ensure the primacy of international human rights law over domestic law. In June Kyrgyzstan’s parliament adopted amendments to remove a provision obligating Kyrgyz courts to reconsider criminal cases in

which an international human rights body has found a violation. The bill is pending review in parliament after the president sent it back for additional amendments. It should now be withdrawn.