

Serious hindrances to the work of human rights defenders ahead of EU-Kyrgyzstan human rights dialogue

Paris-Geneva, October 20, 2008. The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), expresses its deepest concern over recent acts of harassment and intimidation against three human rights defenders in Kyrgyzstan.

On October 12, 2008, Mr. **Ivar Dale**, the Representative of the Norwegian Helsinki Committee (NHC) in Central Asia, was denied access to the Kyrgyz territory after landing at the Manas airport. Despite holding a valid one-year visa, he was told by passport control officers that on September 17, 2008 an order had been issued - probably by the police (MVD) or the Kyrgyz State Committee for National Security (GKNB) - to deny him entry to Kyrgyzstan for 10 years. Mr. Dale called the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the German Embassy in Kyrgyzstan and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), who were all unable to solve the issue. Accordingly, he was forced to take a plane to Istanbul, Turkey, after 21 hours spent in the Manas airport.

Mr. Dale have been trying to open the Bishkek permanent office of the NHC in Kyrgyzstan since November 2006, but has always been prevented from doing so by the authorities. This 10-year ban is probably related to his efforts to further develop the human rights activities of the NHC in the country.

The day after this incident, a big white jeep ran into the car of Mr. **Ramazan Dyrlydaev**, Chairman of the Kyrgyz Committee for Human Rights (KCHR), causing serious damage: the left side of the car as well as back-left and front left lights were broken. Mr. Dyrlydaev suffers concussion in his brain as a consequence. Ms. **Guliza Omurzakova**, a KHRC representative who was in the car at the moment of the accident, complains of headaches and dizziness. As the driver of the jeep escaped, Mr. Dyrlydaev believes that this accident was planned and considers it as an attack against his personal integrity, as he was to take part, on October 15, 2008, in a press conference on the creation of a national movement against human rights violations and arbitrariness in Kyrgyzstan.

The Observatory expresses its deepest concern over these worrying acts targeting human rights defenders in Kyrgyzstan, and considers it as clear evidence of the ongoing determination of the Kyrgyz authorities to strike down any dissenting voice in the country.

As the EU-Kyrgyzstan human rights dialogue will be held on October 27 and 28 in Bishkek, the Observatory strongly urges the Kyrgyz authorities to ensure the full respect of freedom of movement and freedom of association of human rights defenders in the country, and to this end, to:

- repeal the 10-year ban against Mr. Dale so as to guarantee his freedom of movement and association in the country, in conformity with human rights standards and instruments ratified by Kyrgyzstan;
- order a thorough and impartial investigation into the alleged attack against Mr. Dyrlydaev and Ms.

Omurzakova, in order to identify all those responsible, bring them before an ordinary competent and impartial tribunal and apply to them the penal sanctions provided by the law.

The Observatory also calls upon the European Union to raise its concerns on the situation of human rights defenders on the occasion of this dialogue.

The Observatory further recalls that as a Participating State of the OSCE, Kyrgyzstan acknowledges that “the [...] UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders [...] places] a responsibility [...] on States to adopt and implement adequate legislation and administrative procedures that would provide for a conducive environment for human rights defenders to promote and strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels”, and recognises “the need for particular attention, support and protection for human rights defenders by the OSCE, its Institutions and field operations, as well as by participating States”^[1] .

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[1] See OP 6 & OP 8 of the Resolution on Strengthening OSCE Engagement with Human Rights Defenders and National Human Rights Institutions, adopted by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly on July 10, 2007.

