

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/kazakhstan-opposition-journalist-seriously-20-04-2012,42338.html>

Europe/Ex-USSR - Kazakhstan

Extortionate fine

Court orders opposition journalist to pay regional official 30,000 euros

27 July 2012

Court orders opposition journalist to pay regional official 30,000 euros A Kazakh court on 20 July ordered the eminent opposition journalist **Lukpan Akhmedyarov**, founder of the newspaper *Uralskaya Nedelya*, to pay a fine of 5 million tenge (approx. 30,000 euros) to the head of the internal political department of the West Kazakhstan administrative district, Tlekkabyl Imashev.

"We are disgusted by this disproportionate fine, which is clearly intended to strangle the journalist financially," Reporters Without Borders said.

"He has barely recovered from his injuries. It is unacceptable that a journalist can be convicted for having merely highlighted the family ties between political leaders. This persecution must end immediately. We call for the fine to be annulled and all the charges against Lukpan Akhmedyarov to be dropped."

In April, Akhmedyarov was seriously injured in a knife attack and spent nearly a month in hospital (see below).

The verdict, pronounced by Judge Batykgul Baimagambetova in No. 2 Court in the north-western city of Uralsk, was in response to a complaint lodged by Imashev against Akhmedyarov in April.

The latter accused the journalist of trying to damage his reputation in an article headline "Brother, friend and cronyism" published on 2 February, in which Akhmedyarov disclosed the family ties between Imashev and the former prime minister Imangali Tasmagambetov.

A linguistics expert who examined the article concluded that no part of it impugned the dignity or honour of the senior official. Furthermore, an expert from the committee that supervises the health service who was questioned about Imashev's admission to hospital the day after the article appeared, said he had been on the waiting list for 10 days and his admission was not a result of a shock that he claimed to have suffered on reading the article.

Akhmedyarov has lodged an appeal with the Kazakhstan Supreme Court, which is expected to rule on the case in the next few months.

Opposition journalist seriously wounded in vicious attack outside his home

20 April 2012

Reporters Without Borders is in shock after a near-fatal attack on the eminent journalist **Lukpan Akhmedyarov** yesterday evening outside his home in the suburbs of the northwestern city of Uralsk.

"Our thoughts are with the journalist and his family and colleagues," the press freedom organization said. "With this attack, which was particularly shocking in its violence and without precedent in Kazakhstan's recent history, the [continual deterioration in freedom of news and information in the past year](#) has reached the point of no-return.

"It has undoubtedly been encouraged by the general atmosphere of impunity that surrounds the many attacks carried out on journalists.

"How the matter is dealt with will be a test for the Kazakh authorities. An exemplary investigation is called for to track down the perpetrators and deter those tempted to victimize journalists. Letting such an act go unpunished, or a failure to identify those behind it, would blur the responsibility of the authorities and send a negative signal to the independent media, already in the grip of a [wave of detentions and arbitrary summonses](#).

"Lukpan Akhmedyarov is known for his critical views of the authorities and his participation in recent opposition campaigns. This tragedy is far from insignificant and a possible link between the attack and the journalist's professional activities must be given urgent consideration."

During the evening, the journalist had gone out of his house to empty the dustbins and park his car when he was attacked by at least two unidentified men who hit him on the back of the head and stabbed him several times. He was taken to the regional hospital where he underwent emergency surgery.

Doctors said he had suffered a serious head injury and eight stab wounds to the lungs, kidneys, stomach and other vital organs, and his body had traces of air gun pellets. They said he was in a serious condition but his life was not in danger.

Tamara Yeslyamova, the editor of the weekly [Uralskaya Nedelya](#) for which Akhmedyarov works, said he had come under increasing pressure since January after he associated himself with the "malcontents' demonstrations" movement. On several occasions he had unsuccessfully sought permission from the local authorities to organize demonstrations and had continued to muster support among opposition supporters through social networks.

Akhmedyarov had recently received several warnings from the regional public prosecutor's office. His car was stopped and searched several times on the pretext of a search for drugs. He had also complained that he was being followed.

The day before the attack, his wife, who works at the Certification and Standardisation Centre, was called in by her manager who tried to intimidate her. He told her to persuade her husband to stop criticizing the authorities in his articles and to halt his militant activities.

The autocratic government of President Nursultan Nazarbayev, classified as [a Predator of Press Freedom](#) by Reporters Without Borders, has responded brutally to an unprecedented wave of social unrest and security threats in recent months.

[Pressure on independent news organizations has been growing](#) since [the bloody repression of a riot by workers](#) last December, with [a series of detentions, summons by the security services, intimidatory measures](#) and interruptions in the flow of information.

Kazakhstan is ranked [154th of 179 countries in the World Press Freedom Index 2011-2012](#) published by Reporters Without Borders. [It is has also been placed among the countries placed "Under Surveillance"](#) by the organization since last month because of its [increasing use of online censorship](#).

(Picture: Uralskaya Nedelya)
