

27 October 2016

## **Kazakhstan – Detention and judicial harassment of human rights defender Elena Semenova**

On 25 October 2016, human rights defender Ms **Elena Semenova** together with civic activist Ms **Shattik Tazkenova** were forcefully detained by the officers of the Directorate for Combating Organised Crimes of the Republic of Kazakhstan while picketing against the ongoing judicial harassment and arbitrary detention of two civic activists, Mr Max Bokayev and Mr Talgat Ayan. A day earlier, civic activist and blogger, Mr **Rinat Iskaliev**, was severally beaten and threatened in front of his apartment by unidentified men.

[Elena Semenova](#) is a human rights defender and the Chairperson of the **Public Monitoring Commission (PMC)** in the Pavlodar region of Kazakstan, as well as the Head of the public association **Leave the People their Housing**. *Pavlodar PMC* is actively involved in the monitoring of prison conditions and has helped bring approximately 150 cases of detainees, including cases on the grounds of torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, to the attention of the Prosecutor's Office, the Ministry of Interior Affairs and the Administration of the President. *Leave the People their Housing* is an organisation that campaigns, litigates and advocates for the housing and property rights of individuals who have lost their homes and lands due to forced evictions.

On 25 October 2016, Elena Semenova and Shattik Tazkenova conducted pickets in front of the Atyrau City Court building where a court hearing for the case against civic activists Talgat Ayan and Max Bokaev was about to begin. The high profile case has united various civil society groups due to the arbitrary and excessive nature of the judicial harassment on the pretext of critical statements against the government and promoting peaceful protests. Shortly after beginning their picketing, they were detained on the court's premises, forcedly pushed into a police car and brought to the Atyrau police station. While detained they were interrogated for two hours. Elena Semenova and Shattik Tazkenova were subsequently tried and found guilty under Part 1, Article 488 of the Administrative Offences Code (unauthorised holding of public action) and sentenced to a 180 euro fine by the Atyrau City Court.

On 24 October 2016, Rinat Iskaliev, who is also a witness in the case of Maxim Bokayev and Talgat Ayan and who has publicly spoken out against the judiciary harassment against the defendants, was attacked by two unidentified individuals nearby his home. The unidentified individuals approached Rinat Iskaliev while he was walking home late in the evening, warning him to 'stay quiet', before physically attacking him. Following the attack, he was transferred to the Emergency room of the local hospital where he received medical treatment. Rinat Iskaliev has filed a police report regarding the attack.

Front Line Defenders expresses its grave concern at the detention, sentencing and administrative fines imposed against human rights defender, Elena Semenova, and civic activist, Shattik Tazkenova, as well as the physical attack against civic activist Rinat Iskaliev. Front Line Defenders believes the judicial harassment and intimidations are directly linked to their legitimate and peaceful activities in defence of human rights in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

**Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in the Republic of Kazakhstan to:**

1. Immediately and unconditionally quash the sentence against Elena Semenova as it is believed that it is solely motivated by her legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the allegations of excessive use of force during the arrest of the human rights defender;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in the Republic of Kazakhstan are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.