

21 February 2018

Russian Federation: Migrant rights defender Bakhrom Khamroev criminally indicted

On 15 February 2018, a criminal case was opened in Moscow against migrant rights defender **Bakhrom Khamroev**, on the trumped up charge of illegally assisting in the ‘fictitious registration of foreign citizens residency’ under Article 322.3 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation.

[Bakhrom Khamroev](#) is a migrant rights defender, human rights lawyer and Head of *Erdam* (Help), an organisation that works to protect and promote the rights of migrant workers from Central Asia in Russia. The defender also assists Uzbek political refugees whose rights to freedom of expression and freedom of religion are violated both in Uzbekistan and Russia. On 15 February 2018, a criminal case was opened in Moscow against Bakhrom Khamroev. The decision to open the criminal case was communicated to him by the department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia in the Bibirevo district of Moscow.

According to the investigation, Bakhrom Khamroev registered a citizen of Kyrgyzstan, Valisher Kadirov, and a migrant from Tajikistan, Firuz Rustamov, as residing in his apartment in the Moscow district of Bibirevo. On 12 February 2018, the precinct officer asked the human rights defender to indicate the number of people registered with him in his apartment. Valisher Kadirov and Firuz Rustamov now participate in the criminal case as witnesses.

According to the department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs' decision to open a criminal case, Bakhrom Khamroev was guided by "personal interest" and “allegedly deprived the migration service of the opportunity to monitor their movement on the territory of Russia and to monitor whether foreigners observe migration accounting”.

Bakhrom Khamroev has a long history of being subjected to judicial harassment. In 2016 and 2017, Federal Security Bureau (FSB) officers conducted searches in Bakhrom Khamroev's apartment, and in 2010 he was beaten by a security official. He has already been attacked five times by FSB officers and groups of unknown individuals. While criminal investigations were opened by the Russian authorities on some of the attacks, no suspects were identified or brought to justice. The human rights defender was also convicted on fabricated charges of possession of drugs, and sentenced to 1.5 years imprisonment. He was later released on parole.

The Federal Law on Migration obliges migrants and refugees resettling in the Russian Federation to register at a place of residence within a week of arrival in order to legalise their status, and to have access to public services, social assistance and support. The law does not stipulate a limit for the number of individuals who can be registered at a given address, nor does it define ‘fictitious registration’, the charge under which Bakhrom Khamroev is indicted. The human rights defender made his actions known to the migration authorities during the process of organizing the migrants’ registration.

Front Line Defenders expresses concern over the repeated judicial harassment of human rights defender Bakhrom Khamroev as it believes that he is being targeted as a result of his legitimate human rights work.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in the Russian Federation to:

1. Immediately drop all charges against Bakhrom Khamroev;
2. Cease all harassment of the human rights defender;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in the Russian Federation are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.