

25 May 2016

## **Kyrgyzstan – Public insult of human rights defenders Tolekan Ismailova and Aziza Abdirasulova**

On 19 May 2016, human rights defenders Ms **Tolekan Ismailova** and Ms **Aziza Abdirasulova** brought a case to the Pervomaysk region court of Bishkek against the President of Kyrgyzstan Mr Almazbek Atambayev, accusing him of insulting their honour and dignity.

[Tolekan Ismailova](#) and [Aziza Abdirasulova](#) are prominent human rights defenders from Kyrgyzstan. Tolekan Ismailova is Director of **Human Rights Movement: Bir Duino Kyrgyzstan**, which provides legal advice, and works on advocacy for women's rights, labour and land rights, the monitoring of elections and budget transparency of government organs and the promotion of the freedom of association. In particular, the movement has been involved in organising the [International Documentary Film Festival on Human Rights](#). Aziza Abdirasulova is Head of the **Public Foundation 'Kylym Shamy'**, which is involved in monitoring detention facilities and providing legal assistance to victims of torture.

On 19 May 2016, human rights defenders Tolekan Ismailova and Aziza Abdirasulova initiated a lawsuit against the President of Kyrgyzstan at the Pervomaysk region court of Bishkek. They asked the court for a compensation of approximately €52 000 for the President's comments, insulting their honour and dignity, during a speech he gave on 14 May 2016. The human rights defenders have also filed a complaint with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders Mr Michel Forst.

At an awards ceremony on 14 May 2016, the President mentioned a list of people, which included the two human rights defenders, allegedly working to forcefully overthrow the government of the country with the support of foreign secret services. Moreover, he accused Tolekan Ismailova and Aziza Abdirasulova of conducting their activities in Kyrgyzstan with the sole aim of continuing to receive foreign funding. Following his speech, the human rights defenders issued an official statement requesting an apology from the President, which has yet to be acknowledged.

Front Line Defenders condemns the public insult of human rights defenders Tolekan Ismailova and Aziza Abdirasulova by the President of Kyrgyzstan, which is directly linked to their peaceful and legitimate human rights work in the country. Front Line Defenders is concerned by the comments of the Head of the Republic which the human rights defenders fear may be interpreted by some as a call to action against them, and which may cast doubt on the legitimate work of Tolekan Ismailova and Aziza Abdirasulova within public opinion.

**Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Kyrgyzstan to:**

1. Issue an official apology and guarantee appropriate compensation to the human rights defenders for publicly insulting their honour and dignity;
2. Take measures to ensure that government officials or other public figures refrain from making statements or declarations stigmatising the legitimate work of human rights defenders;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Kyrgyzstan are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.