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### **Urgent Appeal - Kazakhstan: Feminita’s Lesbian Kurultai under attack**

On 9 October 2024, representatives of the “Kazakhstan Parents Union” attacked an event in Almaty, Kazakhstan, of one of the leading Kazakhstani feminist and LGBTI initiatives, “**Feminita**”, in an attempt to disrupt it. Representatives of Feminita called the police on the attackers. Three of the Feminita women human rights defenders ended up traveling to the police precincts, where they filed complaints against the representatives of the “Kazakhstan Parents Union.” Feminita requested that Kazakhstani law enforcement investigate the attack on the basis of petty hooliganism.

The Kazakhstan Feminist Initiative “[Feminita](#)” is a grassroots queer-feminist human rights organisation working to protect the rights of women and the most oppressed groups in Kazakhstan (lesbians, bisexuals, queer and trans women, women with disabilities, and women engaged in sex work). [Zhanar Sekerbayeva](#) and [Gulzada Serzhan](#), the co-founders of Kazakhstan Feminist Initiative “Feminita” are prominent women human rights defenders and LGBTQI+ activists. **Aktogyn Kairatova is a woman human rights defender from “Feminita.”**

On 9 October 2024, at approximately 11 am, at least four representatives of the “Kazakhstan Parents Union” attempted to disrupt Feminita’s Lesbian Kurultai by showing up at the venue and attempting to access the event’s grounds. The women, three of whom Feminita representatives were able to identify, shouted offensive comments at the women human rights defenders, banged on the door of the event venue, and filmed the participants and organizers from Feminita without their consent. Women human rights defenders from Feminita reported the attack to the police.

After six police officers arrived on the site of the Lesbian Kurultai, they failed to deescalate the situation and decided to bring the women human rights defenders **Gulzada Serzhan, Zhanar Sekerbayeva and Aktogyn Kairatova** to the Almalinkii District Police Precinct in Almaty. At the precinct, all three women human rights defenders filed a complaint against the attackers, asking the police to investigate them for petty hooliganism under Article 434 of the Code of Administrative Offences of Kazakhstan. The police officers who remained on the location of the Kurultai refused to let the remaining participants out of the venue, and photographed their ID documents without explaining their reason for doing so. At the end of the day, all the participants were permitted to leave the venue. Feminita will continue Lesbian Kurultai as planned, despite the disruption.

On the same day, 9 October, a representative of the Amanat political party to the Kazakhstani Parliament sent a request to the Prosecutor General’s office to ban Feminita’s human rights activities in the country and label it as an extremist organization. In his defamatory comments, the representative of the Parliament stated that Feminita is a “disgusting organization that leads youth into debauchery.” Woman human rights defender **Zhanar Sekerbayeva** in her comment said that Feminita is operating according to their Constitutional right to freedom of assembly.

Since 7 October 2024, feminist and LGBTI initiative “Feminita” have been hosting a Lesbian Kurultai (council), to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the initiative’s work in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

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Lesbian Kurultai brought together a community of queer women and allies from Central Asian countries and beyond to discuss intersectional agendas, including environmental rights issues and their impact of various groups of women.

On the night of 7 October, directly before the start of the event, the venue that Feminita had booked and paid for to host the Kurultai, refused to host the human rights group after allegedly receiving letters from the Akimat (local government) of the city of Almaty urging the venue to refuse service to Feminita. When Feminita was able to identify a friendly location to host the Kurultai in, this venue experienced whole day power outages.

This is not the first time that queer-feminist human rights initiative Feminita and its representatives have been attacked. In May 2021, women human rights defenders **Zhanar Sekerbayeva** and **Gulzada Serzhan** were verbally and physically attacked by unknown male individuals and a police officer in Shymkent, Kazakhstan. The attacks occurred during a public event organised by the two women human rights defenders. Following the attacks, a police officer detained both human rights defenders. Around the same time, Feminita representatives received online threats and were subjected to doxxing, including the publication of **Zhanar Sekerbayeva's** phone number on TikTok and other social media platforms. She ended up receiving over 60 phone calls and 1500 messages on Whatsapp from unknown individuals.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the multifaceted attacks against queer-feminist human rights initiative Feminita and their Lesbian Kurultai event. The organization believes that they are being targeted solely as a result of their work promoting and protecting women's and LGBTQI+ rights in Kazakhstan. Front Line Defenders condemns the intimidation and targeting of Feminita and its leadership, which may have a chilling effect on civil society and is not conducive to the creation of a safe and enabling environment in which human rights defenders can carry out their work in Kazakhstan.

#### **Front Line Defenders urges the authorities of Kazakhstan to:**

1. Publicly condemn the defamatory attacks against queer-feminist human rights initiative Feminita and the physical attacks against their Lesbian Kurultai event;
2. Advise state actors to refrain from defamation and intimidation against queer-feminist human rights initiative Feminita, as well as to refrain from creating unnecessary barriers for Feminita to carry out their human rights work;
3. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of all women human rights defenders at Feminita's Lesbian Kurultai event;
4. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the attacks against Feminita's Lesbian Kurultai, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with national legislation and international standards;
5. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Kazakhstan are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.