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Kazakhstan: Bakhytzhan Toregozhina fined for social media post

On 31 July 2025, the Specialized Interdistrict Administrative Court in Almaty, Kazakhstan, ruled to fine woman human rights defender **Bakhytzhan Toregozhina** approximately KZT 78,000 (140 EUR), finding her guilty of "*disseminating false information by online platform users that creates conditions for violating public order, the rights and legitimate interests of citizens or organizations, or the legally protected interests of society or the state*", under Article 456-2(3) of the Code of Administrative Offenses, for posting on Facebook regarding the hunger strike of political activist Marat Zhylanbaiev. The woman human rights defender and her lawyers will appeal this decision.

[Bakhytzhan Toregozhina](#) is a prominent woman human rights defender in Kazakhstan, leader of the organisation Ar-Rukh-Hak and member of national boards monitoring the status of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience. For over 25 years, she has worked to document and address human rights violations, focusing in particular on cases of torture and inhumane treatment. Since 2012, she has provided legal and humanitarian support to detainees through the Tirek Alliance. In 2023, she received the International Women of Courage Award from the U.S. State Department.

The charges against Bakhytzhan Toregozhina stem from a series of Facebook [posts](#) published on 25 July 2025, in which the woman human rights defender raised concerns over the deteriorating health and ongoing hunger strike of political activist Marat Zhylanbaiev, currently serving a seven-year prison sentence. In her post, she called on the public to urge the President of Kazakhstan to take action following a lawyer's report from an in-person prison visit on 18 July 2025, which described Marat Zhylanbaiev's significant weight loss and fragile condition.

During the court hearing, law enforcement officials argued that her post was "*destructive*" and that it "*created a negative perception of the national penal system*". Despite the fact that the information cited came from first-hand observations by a legal representative, the authorities claimed it lacked evidentiary support. The court also denied the defense's request to summon Marat Zhylanbaiev as a witness via video link.

On 28 July 2025, Bakhytzhan Toregozhina was summoned by the Almaty District Police Department, but only received the summons at 11:55 AM for an appointment scheduled at 11:00 AM. She then received a new summons for the following day, 29 July 2025.

Days earlier, on 27 July 2025, the Committee of the Criminal Penitentiary System had declared Marat Zhylanbaiev's health condition "*satisfactory*" in a statement to local media, while also publicly threatening legal action for the dissemination of "*false information*".

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the judicial harassment against Bakhytzhan Toregozhina in retaliation for her peaceful and legitimate human rights work. The use of vaguely worded laws to penalise human rights defenders for the exercise of their freedom of expression on social media amounts to de facto censorship and has a chilling effect on civic space in Kazakhstan. Such actions restrict access to independent human rights information and severely undermine freedom of expression in the country.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Kazakhstan to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally cease judicial harassment against Bakhytzhan Toregozhina and annul the fine imposed against her;
2. Ensure that authorities refrain from threatening legal action against human rights defenders for their peaceful and legitimate human rights work;
3. End the misuse of censorship laws to criminalise social media content shared by human rights defenders;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Kazakhstan can carry out their activities without fear of reprisals and free from restrictions, in accordance with Kazakhstan's international human rights obligations.

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