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Kazakhstan: Woman human rights defender Zhanar Sekerbayeva detained for 10 days

On 28 February 2025, Kazakhstani law enforcement officials unlawfully detained woman human rights defender **Zhanar Sekerbayeva** and brought her to Almalinsk Police Precinct in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The authorities accused her of violating part 7 of Article 488 of the Code of Administrative Offences of Kazakhstan for organising and conducting peaceful demonstrations. On the same day, the Specialised Inter-district Administrative Court of Almaty sentenced Zhanar Sekerbayeva to 10 days of administrative arrest. She will serve her detention in a Special Reception Center for Administratively Arrested Persons in the Almaty Police Department.

[Zhanar Sekerbayeva](#) is a woman human rights defender, LGBTQI+ activist and a co-founder of Kazakhstan Feminist Initiative “Feminita”. She is also a journalist, poet, researcher and has a PhD in Social sciences (University of Tsukuba). She has been advocating on local and international levels, linking the academic and civic realms.

On 28 February 2025, at approximately 3 p.m local time, three representatives of Kazakhstani law enforcement authorities arrested woman human rights defender Zhanar Sekerbayeva while she was training at the gym, and brought her to the Almalinsk Police Precinct in the city of Almaty. The woman human rights defender reported that the officials did not present any subpoena, meaning she was brought to the precinct unlawfully. One of the officers, who spoke to the woman human rights defenders' lawyer, stated that she is being summoned to collect a clarifying statement under a separate case, where Zhanar Sekerbayeva was being accused of leading an unregistered public association.

At the precinct, the authorities informed her that she is also being targeted for her participation in a peaceful protest on 13 May 2024: on that day, the woman human rights defender had participated in a peaceful protest against femicide, publicly responding to the violent killing of Saltanat Nukenova by her husband, former Minister of the National Economy of Kazakhstan, Kuandyk Bishimbayev, who was on trial during the protest. The authorities accused her of violating part 7 of Article 488 of the Code of Administrative Offences of Kazakhstan concerning organising and conducting peaceful demonstrations.

On the same day, the Specialised Inter-district Administrative Court of Almaty sentenced Zhanar Sekerbayeva to 10 days of administrative arrest and placed her in the Special Reception Center for Administratively Arrested Persons for the Almaty Police Department. The woman human rights defender will remain in detention until March 10, 2025. Her allies from the Feminita initiative reported on their social media page that they see this detention as a measure to prevent Zhanar Sekerbayeva from participating in peaceful protests on International Women's Day. Previously, Kazakhstani authorities have systemically denied women human rights defenders from holding a peaceful demonstration on 8 March in Almaty, citing that the march poses a threat of disturbing the public.

In recent years, Zhanar Sekerbayeva and the Feminita initiative have been systemically targeted for their human rights work. On 19 and 21 February 2025, the Court in Almaty fined the co-founders of Feminita for leading an unregistered public association, despite Feminita being repeatedly denied official state registration as a human rights organisation. This happened after yet another attempt of the “Kazakhstan Parents Union” to disrupt Feminita's event in Almaty on 13 February 2025. In October 2024, representatives of the “Kazakhstan Parents Union” had already

attacked Feminita's event in Almaty in an attempt to disrupt it. Both attacks remain uninvestigated. On the day of the attack, a representative of the Amanat political party in 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 organisation.

Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the arrest and detention of woman human rights defender Zhanar Sekerbayeva, as it believes that she is being targeted for her peaceful and legitimate human rights work. The organisation is gravely concerned about a rapidly growing number of attacks against the woman human rights defender and her initiative Feminita, which are based on bogus grounds. This concern is heightened by the lack of investigations conducted into the violent and disruptive attacks against the woman human rights defender and her initiatives' events. Such targeting may cause a chilling effect on civil society and is not conducive to the creation of a safe and enabling environment to which human rights defenders are entitled to carry out their work in Kazakhstan under international law.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities of Kazakhstan to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release woman human rights defender Zhanar Sekerbayeva from detention and ensure full acquittal;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Zhanar Sekerbayeva;
3. Refrain from using administrative or any other form of detention and intimidation to silence women human rights defenders and prevent their participation in peaceful protests in Kazakhstan;
4. 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.

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