

## **The Kyrgyz Republic: ICJ Concludes Mission on the case of human rights defender Azimjan Askarov**

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) has concluded a fact finding mission concerning the prosecution and trial against human rights defender Azimjan Askarov. The mission was undertaken to respond to allegations of human rights violations surrounding the case, including breaches international fair trial standards during the investigation and trial. Particular concerns were raised about torture and ill-treatment of Mr Askarov, intimidation of lawyers and political pressure on judges.

Azimjan Askarov, a prominent human rights defender, was convicted of a number of serious crimes including complicity in murder, and incitement to ethnic hatred, following ethnic violence in Kyrgyzstan in June 2010. He was sentenced to life imprisonment by the Bazar-Kurgan District Court. On 20 December the Mission attended the Supreme Court hearing in Bishkek where the final appeal of Azimjan Askarov was heard. The guilty verdict and life sentence was upheld by the Court.

The ICJ was invited by the Human Rights Council of Kyrgyzstan to observe the Supreme Court hearing and assess the extent to which international human rights law and national procedures were respected in the case against Mr Askarov.

The mission, which took place from 19 to 21 December conducted meetings with human rights NGOs, Azimjan Askarov, his lawyers, representatives of the victims, Prosecutor General, and examined materials of the case. The Mission consisted of three international legal experts: Róisín Pillay, Senior Legal Advisor of the ICJ Europe Regional Programme; Daniyar Kanafin, lawyer; Dr Eva Rieter, Radboud University Nijmegen. The ICJ's main findings and recommendations on the case will shortly be published in a report. The report will set forth the facts and provide a legal assessment of the prosecution, detention and conviction of Azimjan Askarov.

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