

**DUBLIN**

Front Line Defenders – Head Office
First Floor, Avoca Court
Temple Road, Blackrock
Co. Dublin, A94 R7W3, Ireland

info@frontlinedefenders.org
www.frontlinedefenders.org

phone +353 1 212 3750
fax +353 1 233 8695

BRUSSELS

Front Line Defenders – EU Office
Square Marie-Louise 72
1000 Brussels
Belgium

euoffice@frontlinedefenders.org
www.frontlinedefenders.org

phone +32 2 230 9383
fax +32 2 230 0028

28 April 2023

Kazakhstan: Local authorities prohibit 2024 Women’s March in Almaty

On 21 April 2023, the Specialised Inter-district Administrative Court of Almaty ruled in support of the prohibition of the International Women’s Day March in 2024 by the Akimat (local government) of the city of Almaty, making this the third consecutive year that the march has been refused.

[8MarchKZ](#) is a grassroots feminist human rights initiative in Almaty, Kazakhstan that unites for the purpose of organising the annual feminist and women’s march in Almaty on 8 March. The organising committee of the initiative includes a diverse group of women human rights defenders, who work to promote and protect women and LGBTQI+ rights. The first Women’s March in Almaty took place in 2017.

On 20 March 2023, the 8MarchKZ initiative submitted a notification to the Akimat about holding a Women’s March on 8 March 2024, with the thematic focus of the March being “for the rights of the women of Kazakhstan” which was refused by the Akimat of Almaty. During a court hearing on 12 April 2023, the Akim (local governor) of Almaty, Erbolat Dosayev, justified the decision to disallow the march by stating that it is a threat to public security. The Akim of Almaty argued that the Akimat received letters of concern from an unidentified representative of a group called *On Legalisation of Foreign Vehicles* and from a concerned citizen of the Turkestan region of Kazakhstan, who called to ban the “feminist movement from organising peaceful protests in the city of Almaty.” Eventually, on 21 April 2023, the Specialised Inter-district Administrative Court of Almaty ruled in support of the prohibition of the Women’s March in 2024 by the Akimat of the city of Almaty.

The local governing bodies of Almaty have a history of refusing women human rights defenders to march on International Women’s Day. In 2022, the Akimat of Almaty refused to approve a Women’s March due to alleged road works along the route. Women human rights defenders from 8MarchKZ however, reported that no road works were actually happening on 8 March. In 2023, the Akimat of Almaty once again refused to approve the march, citing that the route and the time-slot suggested were already booked by another civil society actor.

Women human rights defenders who organise the Women’s March on 8 March have also been targeted for their human rights work. In 2019, some organisers, who submitted individual requests to the Akimat for the march to take place, received threats of expulsion from their educational institutions unless they retracted their requests. In 2020, two of the march organisers, woman human rights defenders Fariza Ozpan and Arina Osinovskaya [were fined for the symbolic burning of a flower wreath in commemoration of the victims of gender-based violence](#). Arina Osinovskaya was fined for 66,000 KZT (approximately EUR 119) and Farisa Ospan for 13,000 KZT (approximately EUR 26).

Front Line Defenders condemns the Akimat of Almaty’s refusal to approve the 2024 Women’s March, as well as their denial of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly to feminist and women’s rights defenders. Front Line Defenders calls upon the authorities of Kazakhstan to ensure that 8MarchKZ feminist initiative can exercise their rights to protect and promote women’s rights, feminist agendas, and to peacefully assemble and march for the cause of the International Women’s Day.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Kazakhstan to:

1. Recognise the integral work that 8MarchKZ human rights initiative does to raise awareness on women's rights and feminism;
2. Ensure that 8MarchKZ human rights initiative can fully exercise their rights to peacefully assemble and organise the March on International Women's Day in 2024;
3. Cease targeting women human rights defenders for their peaceful and non-violent human rights work;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in the Republic of Kazakhstan can carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, in line with the Republic of Kazakhstan's international human rights obligations and commitments.