

The European Union Delegation issues the following statement in agreement with the EU Heads of Mission in the Kyrgyz Republic

The EU Delegation together with the EU Heads of Mission in the Kyrgyz Republic is deeply concerned by the Kyrgyzstani Supreme Court's decision to uphold the verdict against eight ethnic Uzbeks, including the well-respected human rights defender, Azimjan Askarov. The EU has followed closely the proceedings of the trials from the beginning, and has regularly raised the cases of fair trial for Mr. Askarov and his co-defendants with the authorities; notably within the framework of the EU- Kyrgyz Republic Human Rights Dialogue.

In all three court instances there have been reports about serious violations of the due legal procedures. Several testimonies and proofs presented in support of the defendants were not considered, and none of them were present during the hearings in the Supreme Court. To this adds the failure of the authorities to adequately address allegations of forced confessions, torture and ill-treatment. The EU calls upon the Kyrgyz authorities to consider all possible ways to re-examine the case of Mr. Askarov and his co-defendants.

This ruling by the Supreme Court sends a negative signal given the importance attached by the Kyrgyz Republic to its international commitments to uphold human rights. It also represents a missed opportunity at a time of political change for the new Kyrgyz Government to demonstrate its determination to ensure the democratization process and the rule of law reform continue in the country.

The EU urges the Kyrgyz Government to accelerate improvements in the implementation of justice reforms and protect the rights of all citizens, especially the rights to a fair trial and access to justice.