

URGENT ACTION

PROMINENT HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER DETAINED

Rita Karasartova, human rights defender and civic governance expert in Kyrgyzstan, was detained on 14 April 2025 after law enforcement raided her home in Bishkek. She now faces charges under Article 278(3) of the Criminal Code for allegedly inciting unrest, which she denies. On 17 April, a court extended her pre-trial detention until 12 May. The hearing was held at night with serious procedural violations. At the next court hearing on 30 May, Rita's detention in the pre-trial detention center was extended until at least 12 June.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

*Head of the Bishkek city prosecutor's office
Kanat Jumaliyevich Nasipov*

*T. Abdymomunov St., 276
Bishkek
720033
Kyrgyz Republic*

e-mail: bishkek@prokuror.kg

Dear Kanat Jumaliyevich,

I am writing to express my deep concern over the detention and prosecution of human rights defender Rita Karasartova.

On 14 April 2025, Rita Karasartova was detained following a search of her home by law enforcement officers. She has been charged under Article 278(3) of the Criminal Code of Kyrgyzstan ("calls for active disobedience to lawful demands of representatives of the authorities, and for mass riots"). These charges are vague, appear to be politically motivated and in retaliation for her peaceful human rights work and civic participation.

Rita Karasartova has committed no criminal offence, and her actions posed no threat to public safety.

The misuse of the criminal justice system against human rights defenders and the broader crackdown on civil society in Kyrgyzstan reflect an alarming trend toward silencing dissent and restricting human rights. These actions directly violate Kyrgyzstan's international human rights obligations.

I urge you to take all necessary steps to ensure Rita Karasartova's immediate and unconditional release, that all charges against her are dropped, and that her right to continue her activities without undue restrictions is guaranteed.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Rita Karasartova is a human rights defender and expert in civic governance from Kyrgyzstan. She leads the non-governmental Institute for Public Analysis and is a member of the United Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan.

On the evening of 14 April 2025, law enforcement officers conducted a search of Rita Karasartova's home in Bishkek. According to eyewitnesses, a group of 12 officers – three of whom were masked and armed – confiscated electronic equipment and documents. Rita Karasartova was taken to police headquarters for questioning and subsequently placed in a temporary detention facility for 48 hours. The search and arrest occurred shortly after she shared a letter on her Facebook page from exiled Kyrgyzstani activist Tilekmat Kurenov, a civil society activist presumed forcibly disappeared in the United Arab Emirates.

Rita Karasartova has been charged under Article 278(3) of the Criminal Code of Kyrgyzstan ("Calls for active disobedience to lawful demands of representatives of the authorities, and for mass riots, as well as calls for violence against citizens"). She has rejected the charges, calling them fabricated.

On 17 April, during a court hearing, it was announced that Rita Karasartova would remain in pre-trial detention until at least 12 May. The hearing was conducted with serious procedural violations. The judge did not provide all required procedural documents to the defence and did not allow Rita Karasartova a Kyrgyz interpreter. The judge stated that "procedural violations were committed during her detention, but the detention itself was justified. The court hearing was also held late at night, between 16 and 17 April.

The next hearing to extend the pre-trial detention took place on 30 April. As a result, Rita will remain in the pre-trial detention until at least 12 June.

Rita Karasartova was previously arrested on 23 October 2022 along with other activists and politicians who demanded transparency for a new border demarcation agreement with Uzbekistan that would cede control of the Kempir-Abad (Andizhan) fresh-water reservoir to Uzbekistan. She spent months detained in a cramped cell, unable to see or speak to her family, and was later placed under house arrest. She was charged with attempting to "violently overthrow the government" and faced 20 years' imprisonment.

On 14 June 2024, a court in Bishkek, acquitted 22 defendants in the Kempir-Abad case, including Rita Karasartova. The Kyrgyzstani prosecutor's office filed an appeal against the acquittal and appeal proceedings are ongoing. The court's decision may yet change.

Rita Karasartova was featured in Amnesty International's Write for Rights 2023 campaign.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Kyrgyz, Russian

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 16.06.2025

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Rita Karasartova (she/her)

ADDITIONAL TARGETS

His Excellency Mr Ulan Djusupov
Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary
Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic
Ascot House 119 Crawford Street W1U 6BJ
020 3865 1994
kgembassy.uk@mfa.gov.kg
<https://mfa.gov.kg/ru/dm/vb>
Monday-Friday 09.00-18.00
Salutation: Your Excellency