

Kyrgyzstan: Reverse entry ban on FIDH staff, international HRDs

Oslo, 12 December 2025

The Norwegian Helsinki Committee was disappointed and saddened to learn that on 12 December, 2025, three staff members of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), a human rights umbrella organization of which the NHC is a member, were barred from entering Kyrgyzstan upon arrival to Manas International Airport in Bishkek.

Ilya Nuzov, Head of the Eastern Europe and Central Asia Desk, his colleague Raphael Lopoukine and one further FIDH staff member, were deported from Kyrgyzstan the same day. Border guards did not provide a reason for the entry ban.

FIDH staff traveled to Kyrgyzstan to participate¹ in the 19th International Documentary Film Festival “Bir Duino”, organized by the respected human rights organization by the same name. The festival takes place 12-16 December in Bishkek and draws human rights activists and film lovers from all over the world. It is customary for Bir Duino to invite international human rights experts to participate as jury members at the film festival.

The entry ban on FIDH staff echoes the practice under a former Kyrgyz government led by Kurmanbek Bakiev. In the period 2008-2010 several foreign human rights defenders were deported from Kyrgyzstan and declared “Persona Non Grata”. While a ban on Norwegian Helsinki Committee staff was removed a few years later, several prominent human rights defenders remain unable to visit Kyrgyzstan. These include Mihra Rittmann² from Human Rights Watch (U.S.), Vitaliy Ponomarev³ from the now “liquidated” Human Rights Center Memorial (Russian Federation) and Nigina Bakhrieva⁴ from NotaBene (Tajikistan). In spite of 5 and 10-year limits having expired, these individuals are still unable to freely enter the country, almost fifteen years on.

Meanwhile, Kyrgyzstan has fallen dramatically on global human rights rankings in recent years. As previously noted by FIDH itself, Kyrgyzstan appears to be strengthening its legislative arsenal against NGOs, independent media and critical civic initiatives, restricting

¹ <https://www.fidh.org/en/region/europe-central-asia/kyrgyzstan/supporting-the-voice-of-documentary-filmmakers-in-bishkek>

² <https://nhc.no/en/reverse-travel-ban-on-hrw-researcher/>

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https://24.kg/english/57547_Human_rights_organizations_demand_to_lift_ban_on_Ponomarevs_entry_to_Kyrgyzstan/

⁴ <https://www.omct.org/en/resources/urgent-interventions/travel-ban-imposed-against-ms-nigina-bakhrieva>

foreign funding, freedom of association or public expression.

The Norwegian Helsinki Committee urges Kyrgyz authorities to not return to the times when Kyrgyzstan led an aggressive policy towards human rights organizations. We urge you to remove the entry ban on FIDH staff. We renew our appeal to Kyrgyz authorities to remove the long-since expired travel bans on Ms Rittmann, Mr Ponomarev and Ms Bakhrieva.