

XINJIANG KAZAKH SINGER, JOURNALIST AND ACTIVIST ZHANARGÜL ZHUMATAY HAS BEEN ARRESTED IN XINJIANG

WHAT HAPPENED

Yesterday, on February 10th, at 7.40pm Beijing time, Zhanargül Zhumatay (also spelled: Janargül Jumatay, 加娜古丽·朱马太 , ID 650105197511302220) was arrested at her sister's home in Bayangu Village, Banfangu Township, Ürümchi county in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. She was detained by two police officers from the State Security (Guobao) Saybagh District in Ürümchi City, who according to a witness forcefully entered the house and dragged her out, though she resisted. They did not allow her to take her jacket. They confiscated her phone. There is no report of her being handcuffed or hooded during the arrest. Most likely she was not. A number of other people were in the house during the arrest. Besides Zhanargül and her sister, also the sister's children and her elderly sick mother were present. Her mother fainted when they took Zhanargül away. As the police arresting her were from the Guobao of Saybagh and as they drove an hour (56 km) to Bayangu in order to detain her, she is now assumed to be at the police station of Saybagh, Ürümchi, but we have no final confirmation of this.

HOW DO I KNOW?

I received this news from Serikjan Bilash a few hours later around on February 10th at 6pm CET. I contacted the human rights organisation Ata Jurt in Almaty who had been in close contact with Zhanargül and her relatives. After trying to reach Zhanargül herself without luck, I called her mother's phone and reached her siblings who spoke to me and confirmed the information above. I spoke to them twice during the evening and they did not have further information or confirmation about Zhanargül's whereabouts but they confirmed that it was Saybagh District's Guobao who arrested her. Zhanargül had been aware and scared of the possibility that she may be arrested more than a month already. Since 2 January 2023, I have been speaking to her on the phone on a near-daily basis and she has repeatedly expressed this worry. She told me that she was receiving threats from unknown sources that she suspected could be connected to the police and local administration. She kept asking me to share with the world in case she was arrested or hurt by the Chinese government.

LEADING UP TO THE ARREST

Earlier in the day (10 February 2023) Zhanargül had received two calls from officers

in the local administration, who asked her if she were home. She refused to answer them. She recorded these conversations and shared them with Ata Jurt who have in turn shared them with me. A transcript and translation of these conversations will be made available soon. In the afternoon she was picked up from her sister's home by two Kazakh police officers from the local police and taken away by car for questioning. Her sister filmed with her phone as Zhanargül was taken away from her house and shared it. Zhanargül later returned to her sister's house, but only for short, as she was, arrested at 7.40 pm on the same day. During the week before she had received strange phone calls from someone warning her that she would never be let out of China and that she would be arrested and also received text messages from unknown numbers with cryptic messages that she took to be disguised threats such as "114" (in Chinese pronounces "yaoyaosi", which could also mean "you will die"). She assumed that this was connected to her trying to leave the country by obtaining visa to Kazakhstan and applying for a passport. After much difficulty she was finally allowed to apply for her passport with the Saybagh Entrance-Exit Authorities on January 17. The original date of issue was supposed to have been January 30, but the authorities asked her to wait for another few days and now, just before the arrest, had determined the new issue date to issue the passport by the coming Friday, February 17th. While waiting for her passport, Zhanargül hardly left her mother's apartment in Saybagh District until a week ago when one of her relatives in Bayangu died and she joined her family to go to a commemoration ceremony. She had stayed here for a few days before being detained on February 10. During these days I spoke to her over the phone twice. Since January 2nd we had been speaking almost daily. He had continuously expressed her desire to leave China as she no longer trusted the government after having been detained in camp for over two years and subsequently been unable to continue her life in Xinjiang due to discrimination and constant security checks. It was her expressed wish to exit to Kazakhstan in order to start a family here.