



MEPs address Kazakhstani authorities on political prisoners and EU- Kazakhstan PCA

On November 13, 2017, MEPs submitted two written questions to the EU VP/HR on the politically motivated prosecutions taking place in Kazakhstan. This comes after MEPs, on October 19, addressed letters to the Kazakhstani state authorities, demanding the release of several political prisoners. In their addresses, MEPs made specific reference to individual cases of prosecutions - against civil society and trade union activists, journalists, bloggers and land reform protesters - and signed a separate letter and written question regarding the cases of Mr Mukhtar Dzhakishev and Mr Muratkhan Tokmadi.

On October 19, several MEPs - among them: Chairman of DROI Committee **Mr Pier Antonio PANZERI** (Italy, S&D), **Mr Brando BENIFEI** (Italy, S&D), **Ms Mady DELVAUX** (Luxembourg, S&D), **Ms Ana GOMES** (Portugal, S&D), **Mr Tunne KELAM** (Estonia, EPP), **Mr Urmas PAET** (Estonia, ALDE), **Ms Julie WARD** (United Kingdom, S&D), **Mr Helmut SCHOLZ** (Germany, GUE/NL), **Ms Lola SANCHEZ CALDENTEY** (Spain, GUE/NL), **Mr Igor SOLTES** (Slovenia, Greens/EFA), **Ms Barbara SPINELLI** (Italy, GUE/NL), **Mr Bart STAES** (Belgium, Greens/EFA) and **Ms Hilde VAUTMANS** (Belgium, ALDE) - signed an official letter addressed to the authorities of the Republic of Kazakhstan launching an appeal in favour of the victims of political prosecutions and political prisoners. A second letter specifically addressed the urgent situations of **Mr Dzhakishev** and **Mr Tokmadi**.

The situation of human rights in Kazakhstan and especially that of politically motivated prosecutions has been at the centre of the worries of NGOs focused on the country. During a [mission](#) to the European Parliament held in September, 2017, the Open Dialog Foundation presented findings and recommendations in regards to civil, political and human rights in the Republic of Kazakhstan. ODF and a delegation from Kazakhstan held a series of bilateral meetings with Members of the Parliament, journalists, Policy Advisors, EEAS and Permanent Representations to the EU.

As emphasised by the MEPs, the deterioration of civil liberties, such as freedom of speech or assembly, is deeply worrying, as shown by the fact that **citizens in Kazakhstan are "convicted for public criticism of the authorities, for participating in peaceful rallies, for civil and trade union activities, for conducting journalistic investigations, for publishing and sharing posts on social networks"**.

The MEPs expressed their concern over the **17 political prisoners** being held in Kazakhstani prisons whose names and cases are listed in [ODF's latest report](#), as well as over the state's crackdown on the freedom of the media and freedom of speech, with "all influential non-state media in Kazakhstan [being] closed" and people being arrested and sentenced to prison terms for expressing political views and opinions on social networks. "Civil society activists **Maks Bokayev**

and **Talgat Ayan** received prison terms for participating in peaceful rally. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention recommended that the Kazakhstani authorities immediately release Bokayev and Ayan," MEPs wrote. They added that "trade union activists **Amin Eleusinov** and **Nurbek Kushakbayev** have been sent to prison for their legitimate work to protect labour rights. **Independent trade unions in Kazakhstan have been destroyed.**"

We welcome the fact that on November 24, 2017 an EU delegation visited Bokayev in Petropavlovsk's detention facilities. Furthermore, members of the EP have submitted **two written questions to the EU VP/HR**, drawing attention to the worrisome situation of human rights and political prosecutions in Kazakhstan and demanding the EU open a debate and consider more firmly such conditions in the broader diplomatic and trade relations with the Republic of Kazakhstan.

MEPs additionally wrote a separate letter and written question concerning the specific cases of political prisoners Mr Dzhakishev and Mr Tokmadi, both "victims of the political prosecution against opponent Mukhtar Ablyazov". Mr Tokmadi, arrested on June 12, 2017 during an operation conducted by Kazakhstani special forces, "has been subjected to coercive pressures in a bid to obtain false testimony against Mr Ablyazov". The pressures exerted on him by police authorities have gone as far as involving his closest relatives and friends.

Mr Mukhtar Dzhakishev is currently serving 14 years in prison in retaliation for Mr Ablyazov's opposition activities. Dzhakishev's health is deteriorating. In over eight years of detention, he has developed life-threatening diseases such as arterial hypertension and left ventricular hypertrophy. In detention, he has been beaten repeatedly and is not granted the necessary medical care.

The appeal of MEPs comes after members of the [PACE had also addressed Kazakhstani authorities](#) on these issues. Their voices join together in urging the Republic of Kazakhstan to stop politically motivated prosecution and mistreatment of detainees and "immediately release unjustly detained political prisoners".

Download the letters from Members of the European Parliament:

- the electronic versions of the letters [\[1\]](#), [\[2\]](#)

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- [Kazakhstan: The life of political prisoner Mukhtar Dzhakishev is in danger](#)
- [The case of Muratkhan Tokmadi](#)
- [The list of Kazakhstani political prisoners and persons subjected to politically motivated prosecution by Kazakhstan](#)