



Brussels, 26 May 2020

To:

**H.E. Volodymyr Zelensky**

President of Ukraine

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**Re: Appeal to reconsider the denial of asylum to Kazakhstani journalist and oppositionist Zhanara Akhmetova in Ukraine**

Dear Colleagues,

As Members of the European Parliament, we are writing this letter to express our concerns regarding the case of Ms Zhanara Akhmetova, a prominent Kazakhstani journalist and one of the leaders of the “Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan”, the largest peaceful opposition movement in Kazakhstan. In 2017, Akhmetova fled Kazakhstan with her 12-year-old son and applied for asylum in Ukraine, fearing prosecution for her lawful journalistic and opposition activities.

It is with regret that we acknowledge that on May 14, 2020, the Supreme Court of Ukraine overturned its previous instance and rejected the asylum application for Akhmetova and her son. We would like to reiterate that, if extradited to her homeland, she may be subjected to torture and sentenced to imprisonment following an unfair trial.

In particular, we are concerned about the fact that the Migration Service of Ukraine and the Supreme Court had refused to take into consideration the political context of her prosecution, as underlined by many prominent officials and coalitions of human rights organisations<sup>1</sup>. Among them we recall the statement of the head of the U.S. Helsinki Commission<sup>2</sup>, members of the Italian Parliament<sup>3</sup>, that of our colleagues in the European Parliament<sup>4</sup> and many others. Moreover, the fact that the hearing was held in the absence of Ms Akhmetova's lawyer and that she was informed about the decision only five days after it was taken - on 19 of May, 2020 - raises grave concerns over the way that the hearing was carried out.

Therefore, we join the appeal of our colleagues - members of the European Parliament's informal group 'Friends of European Ukraine' - and we express our concerns regarding the potential extradition of Ms Akhmetova to Kazakhstan, where she would be tortured and unfairly tried. Under such circumstances, we ask the responsible Ukrainian authorities to reevaluate the decision, take into consideration the political nature of her prosecution and ultimately prevent her extradition. In line with Art. 106 par. 26 of the Constitution of Ukraine<sup>5</sup>, we appeal to President Zelensky to grant Ms Akhmetova and her son asylum.

It is crucial that during the process Ukraine complies with the international agreements it is party to, specifically the UN Convention against Torture, the UN Convention on the Status of Refugees, the European Convention on Human Rights, the European Convention on Extradition, the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Yours sincerely,

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Brando BENIFEI, S&D, Italy  
Raphaël GLUCKSMANN, S&D, France  
Nacho SÁNCHEZ AMOR, S&D, Spain  
Isabel SANTOS, S&D, Portugal  
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CC:

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<sup>1</sup> [Ukraine NGOs made stand for Kazakh journalist, opposing her extradition](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Chairman Hastings Urges Ukraine to Grant Akhmetova Political Asylum](#)

<sup>3</sup> <https://twitter.com/rampi/status/1216718570526298112?s=20>

<sup>4</sup> <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/EYi3Vc3XgAUBsmz.jpg>

<sup>5</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/constitution-of-ukraine/168071f58b>