
Statement of the Open Dialogue Foundation at SESSION III: The Role of Civil Society in Advancing the Right to Freedom of religion or Belief for All

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am representing the international organisation Open Dialogue Foundation, which conducts human rights monitoring of post-Soviet region. This year we observe gross violation of freedom of religion in Kazakhstan.

After the murder of human rights activist and blogger Dulat Agadil in February 2020 a minimum of 183 people were prosecuted for taking part in the memorial ceremonies in his honour. Criminal proceedings have been initiated against at least 60 activists. Most of them have been charged with "participation in the activities of the extremist organisation" (Article 405 Part 2 of the Criminal Code).

I would like to pay your attention on political persecution of Imams (spirit leaders of Muslim communities) in Kazakhstan. In Taraz city Imam Eldos Kyrykbayev was subjected to criminal prosecution for refusal to cooperate with authorities, who demanded to give false testimony against political prisoner Bagdat Baktybayev.

Imam Abdulkarim Hassan was arrested for 10 days for reading a prayer over the grave of murdered opposition activist Dulat Agadil. The wife of Imam, Bakyt Hassan, was fined just for a preaching.

The facts above indicate that the authorities of Kazakhstan literally kill oppositionists and forbid honoring their memory. Our request to the authorities of Kazakhstan is following: to immediately stop the persecution of civil society for political and religious reasons.

I would like also to refute the Kazakh Ambassador's propaganda about the supposedly independent investigation of the murder of Dulat Agadil in the pre-trial detention facility. President Tokayev spoke out about the reason for the murder before any expertise was published and criminal cases were so-called investigated. The authorities systematically harass and criminally prosecute those seeking the truth for Dulat Agadil, including family members. A shocking video taken by Agadil's family members and activists shows multiple bruises and abrasions on the corpse of the blogger, which indicates the use of torture and ill-treatment on the detainee.

The experts involved in the Dulat Agadil case spoke together with representatives of the General Prosecutor's Office and simply repeated their version.

We recommend the OSCE member states to impose personal sanctions against high-level officials of Kazakhstan, who are directly responsible for systematic violation of human rights, freedom of religion and belief; for torture in detention facilities and jails, political killings and mass arbitrary arrests of peaceful protesters in Kazakhstan. The names of sanction lists candidates are mentioned in our latest report supported by Kazakhstani civil society and family of murdered Dulat Agadil.

Thank you for attention,

Maksym Sytnikov

