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We, members of the PACE, underline important role of Interpol for the pursuit and detention of dangerous criminals. We welcome that in November 2016 the reform of structure and policies of Interpol was started. The aim of these amendments is to solve the problem of violations of art. 3 of the Interpol Constitution. Non-democratic states carry out political persecution through the Interpol system.

Interpol reform is in PACE work agenda and we are grateful to the representatives of Interpol for openness and exchange of views. On 26 April, 2017, PACE approved resolution on the topic of «Abusive recourse to the Interpol system: the need for more stringent legal safeguards»¹. PACE provided recommendations on further reform of Interpol. Besides, Interpol reform is subject of interest for human rights organisations. For example, there is analysis of the reform and additional recommendations in the last report of the Open Dialog Foundation².

In this letter we would like to draw attention to several cases, which serve as examples of misuse of Interpol for political purposes.

Yan Andreev – the former head of one of districts of the Yaroslavl region (Russia). He did not belong to the ruling party ‘United Russia’, and because of that has been subjected to persecution. The governor of Yaroslavl region demanded that Andreev resign, but he refused to do that. After that, four criminal cases were initiated against Andreev on charges of corruption crimes. The court acquitted him on all counts. But region's leadership continued to threaten him. In December 2011, the Russian authorities initiated the fifth criminal case against Andreev, after which put him on Interpol's wanted list. He lives in Israel, where he has residence permit.

By abusing Interpol, Kazakhstani regime persecutes its political opponents – oppositionist **Mukhtar Ablyazov**, as well as **his colleagues and relatives**. Kazakhstan accused them of financial crimes (the case of BTA Bank). In order to have more «chances» to extradite them, Kazakhstan had corruption influence to Ukrainian and Russian investigation on this case (the published correspondence confirmed this). On 9 December, 2016, the French State Council recognised Ablyazov's case as politically motivated, and also stressed that Kazakhstan had exerted pressure on the Ukrainian and Russian authorities, demanding that they submit extradition requests.

Also Kazakhstan persecutes the **Khrapunov family** – Ablyazov's relatives and opponents of Kazakhstani regime. Authorities required from Khrapunov family to sever ties with Ablyazov and testify against him. They refused to do that. After that Kazakhstani authorities called Khrapunov family «a criminal group» and initiated against them more than 20 criminal cases on financial crimes. **Victor Khrapunov, Leila Khrapunova**, their son **Ilyas Khrapunov** and their relative **Aiyar Ilyassov** are in Interpol's wanted list on Kazakhstan request. They have residence permit in Switzerland. Switzerland refused to extradite Victor

¹ <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-DocDetails-EN.asp?FileID=23714&lang=EN> ; <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-DocDetails-EN.asp?FileID=23524&lang=EN> ;

² <http://en.odfoundation.eu/a/8201,the-report-the-reform-of-interpol-don-t-let-it-be-stopped-halfway>

Khrapunov to Kazakhstan twice (in 2011 and in 2014). Ukraine also put Ilyas Khrapunov on the wanted list.

Anatoliy Pogorelov – former Ablyazov’s colleague while working in BTA Bank. He is wanted by Interpol at the request of Kazakhstan. 12 Ablyazov’s associates, who are included in the same case as Pogorelov, have been granted asylum in the EU and the United States. Interpol has already removed some of them from the wanted list (Tatiana Paraskevich, Artur Trofimov, Alexandr Pavlov, Kuanysh Nurgazin). Pogorelov resides in unsafe state – the United Arab Emirates, which are not a party to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Ferid Yusub - a citizen of Azerbaijan. He had a conflict with one of the leaders of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Azerbaijan, after which he has been subjected to criminal persecution. On 6 January, 2013, the UNHCR in Egypt granted Yusub refugee status. Azerbaijan put him on Interpol wanted list. In May 2015 he was detained in Russia. Russian authorities approved his extradition to Azerbaijan. Interpol removed Yusub’s name from the wanted list. But Russian authorities ignore this fact and do not recognize decision of the UNHCR on Yusub’s case.

Moreover, we would like to warn Interpol bodies about facts which confirm high probability of being placed on Interpol wanted list under politically motivated charges. In particular, we are talking about opponents of Moldovan authorities (opponents of the Moldovan oligarch Vladimir Plahotniuc) – lawyer and human rights activist **Ana Ursachi**³, and businessman and activist **Alexandru Machedon**⁴.

Leyla Yunus, Arif Yunus – Azerbaijan human rights activists, which in 2015 were sentenced to long court terms in Azerbaijan. After protests of the international community, the appellate court changing the penalty to a suspended sentence. On 3 May, 2016, Arif and Leyla Yunus were granted refugee status in the Netherlands. The Yunus family filed a cassation appeal demanding their full acquittal, and the Azerbaijani court issued a warrant for their compulsory appearance in court.

We would like to draw Interpol’s attention to political nature of persecution of Yan Andreev, members of the Khrapunov family, Anatoliy Pogorelov and Ferid Yusub. Pogorelov and Yusub are in unsafe states and cannot count on protection of their rights. That is why we ask Interpol to help in situation when UAE and Russia should provide Pogorelov and Yusub with freedom of movement. Moreover, it is important that opponents of Azerbaijan authorities (the Yunus family) and Moldovan authorities (Ana Ursachi and Alexandru Machedon) should not be included on Interpol wanted list.

We express our gratitude to Interpol for its constructive dialogue and hope for further cooperation in order to prevent political persecutions through Interpol system.

Mr Frank SCHWABE, a member of the Monitoring Committee and Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights (Germany)

Mr Yves CRUCHTEN, a member of the Monitoring Committee and General Rapporteur on the abolition of the death penalty: Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights (Luxembourg)

Mr Ertuğrul KÜRKÇÜ, Vice-Chairperson: Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development (Turkey)

Mr Nikolaj VILLUMSEN, a member of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination (Denmark)

³ She is accused of involvement in the murder committed 20 years earlier.

⁴ According to Ana Ursachi, a criminal case is being prepared in Moldova against Machedon on charges of economic crimes.

Ms Nellija KLEINBERGA, a member of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons (Latvia)

Mr Henk OVERBEEK, a member of the Sub-Committee on relations with the OECD and the EBRD (Netherlands)

Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS, a member of the Sub-Committee on the Middle East and the Arab World (Lithuania)