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POLITICAL PRISONER VLADIMIR KOZLOV PLACED IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT AND HAS GONE ON HUNGER STRIKE

A Kazakhstani political prisoner is being subjected to ill treatment. Vladimir Kozlov has been systematically denied a transfer to milder conditions of detention and release on parole. The conditions in a sultry confinement cell, where a prisoner can only stand or sit on the floor could be critical for Kozlov given his poor health condition. In anticipation of the ratification of the new Partnership Agreement with Kazakhstan, EU countries must urgently intervene in this matter and demand the unconditional release of Vladimir Kozlov. Otherwise, the situation as regards the most famous political prisoner in Kazakhstan could become tragic.

On 17 July, 2015, Vladimir Kozlov called his wife Aliya Turusbekova, but only managed to say, "I'm being placed in a punishment cell (solitary confinement)". He was sent to a punishment cell for 10 days after he stood up against the persecution he was being subjected to by the administration of penal colony No. 155/14 in Almaty province as well as the cruel conditions of his detention. On 20 July, 2015, Kozlov went on hunger strike.

In the period between 25 June, 2015 and 9 July, 2015, the political prisoner was hospitalised in the medical unit of the colony having been diagnosed with "varicose veins of the legs". According to Turusbekova, doctors warned Kozlov about possible complications: prolonged standing was contraindicated. Despite this, the Ministry of Internal Affairs has assessed Kozlov's health condition as 'satisfactory'.¹

Along with other prisoners, Vladimir Kozlov has been forced to spend every day standing, despite the fact that the air temperature is hovering around 50 degrees Celsius.² Kozlov suffers from severe headaches and fatigue. "In the case of this category of patients, heart attacks and strokes are possible in such hot temperatures" - a well-known Kazakh medic, Bakhyt Tumenova stated, whilst also recalling that Kozlov suffers from vascular disorders.³ On 10 July, 2015, the political prisoner wrote a complaint to the prison authorities regarding violations of his right to medical aid (Art. 10, point 8 of the Penal Execution Code).

In a telephone conversation with his son, Kozlov explained that on 14 July, 2015, due to the hot temperature, his legs became swollen, and so, without asking for permission, he went to the sleeping quarters. The colony workers immediately registered this fact and punished him with admonition for "violation of the colony regime." Kozlov has filed a complaint with the court against the decision and has stated to the employees of the colony: "If someone needs me to fight here, I definitely will, I can do my time until the end".⁴ **The prison administration regarded these words as a "threat of physical violence" and issued Kozlov a further punishment on 16 July, 2015.**

In this connection, Kozlov may be refused a transfer to a colony with less harsh conditions of detention. In order for the transfer to be possible, a prisoner must have incurred no penalties and should demonstrate a positive 'degree of behaviour' (PEC, Chapter 22). Permission for a transfer to milder

¹ <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1035074899838428&set=a.101586659853928.3592.100000077838810&type=1>

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7NaOoL0YONQ>

³ <http://www.respublika-kaz.info/news/politics/42711/>

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7NaOoL0YONQ>

conditions of detention entitles a prisoner to be transferred to an open colony, as well as released on parole after serving half of his sentence (PEC, Article 72). ***Half of Kozlov's term will have been served later this year***; on 8 October, 2012, Kozlov was sentenced to 7.5 years in prison for his support of the striking oil workers in Zhanaozen. ***However, the authorities are doing everything they possibly can to prevent Kozlov's release on parole.***

Let us remind ourselves that in August 2014, Kozlov was denied a transfer to milder conditions of detention because of sanctions that he had not even been informed of. The same decision was issued on **5 February, 2015**, when the prison commission issued Kozlov's inmate report in which it stated that he "may be dangerous to others" has "average intelligence", "has a positive attitude towards work, but still does not repent." The same description was drawn up in December 2014.⁵ It is noteworthy that the prison administration did not make any commendation on Kozlov, even though he has been awarded a diploma by the prison college, provides legal assistance to prisoners, has initiated the establishment of cultural and educational centre and organised a chess tournament.⁶

Kozlov's fight for his rights could be the main reason for reprisals by the prison administration. Kozlov files statements with the Interior Ministry about incidents of ill-treatment and helps other inmates register complaints. The prison administration, which drew the attention of human rights defenders and the international community, has banned the taking of photos of the political prisoner.⁷

The journalist Irina Petrushova received information that ***the prison administration collects testimonies from other prisoners about alleged violations of the prison regulations committed by Kozlov.*** At the same time, prisoners are ordered to sign statements which prohibit them from registering complaints against the prison administration.⁸ Previously, the Open Dialog Foundation reported that the prison authorities beat prisoners, and demand that they create unbearable conditions of stay for Kozlov.⁹

Another reason for the increase in oppression could be the retaliation of the Kazakh authorities for the fact that, thus far, they have not been able to lay their hands on their main opponent, Mukhtar Ablyazov. He is awaiting France's decision on the possibility of his extradition to Ukraine or Russia.¹⁰ Widely publicised were the incidents of illegal influence initiated by Kazakhstan on the Ukrainian and Russian investigative bodies, as well as representatives of the French authorities.¹¹ In May 2015, in a telephone conversation with his wife, Kozlov asked her to pass on birthday greetings to Ablyazov. Afterwards, the administration searched Kozlov's cell as they suspected that he had called Ablyazov directly.¹²

The main condition for the signing and ratification of the new Partnership Agreement between the EU and Kazakhstan should be the full implementation of the recommendations of the European Union on human rights in Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan has ignored repeated calls by the European Parliament for the release of Vladimir Kozlov and other political prisoners (resolution of 22 November, 2012, 18 April, 2014, 13 March, 2014).

The need to release Kozlov on the eve of the ratification of the Partnership Agreement has been indicated by ALDE Vice-President Fernando Maura on 12 May, 2015.¹³ On 21 April, 2015, Vice-President

⁵ <http://en.odfoundation.eu/a/4759.a-step-back-in-the-field-of-human-rights-kazakhstan-refused-to-alleviate-the-plight-of-political-prisoners-vladimir-kozlov-and-roza-tuletayeva> ; <https://www.facebook.com/aliya.alga/posts/896532153743924> ; <http://en.odfoundation.eu/a/5637.soviet-penal-colony-management-methods-by-lying-the-report-that-kozlov-is-a-threat-to-inmates>

⁶ <http://www.respublika-kaz.info/news/politics/40585/>

⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/ir.petrushova/posts/477843592396265>

⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/ir.petrushova/posts/490101871170437>

⁹ <http://en.odfoundation.eu/a/4997.vladimir-kozlov-faces-provocations-contrived-to-bring-about-his-transfer-to-a-strict-regime-penal-colony-prisoners-are-subjected-to-battery>

¹⁰ <http://en.odfoundation.eu/a/6460.report-france-should-not-allow-the-deadly-rendering-of-the-kazakh-oppositionist>

¹¹ <http://en.odfoundation.eu/a/6139.report-the-case-of-mukhtar-ablyazov-in-ukraine>

¹² <https://www.facebook.com/ir.petrushova/posts/464140577099900>

¹³ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+WQ+E-2015-007607+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=en>

of the European Commission Federica Mogherini noted that the Partnership Agreement with Kazakhstan recognises the importance of human rights observance.¹⁴

In January 2015, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of assembly managed to visit Vladimir Kozlov in the colony. The EU Delegation in Kazakhstan also filed a request in this regard in June 2014, however, "it has not been met with a positive response" from the Kazakh authorities.¹⁵

The EU, which is a major investor in Kazakhstan, should not forget the victims of political oppression who continue to languish in different prisons of Kazakhstan (Vladimir Kozlov, Vadim Kuramshin, Aron Atabek). Every time the pressure from the EU subsides, the Kazakh authorities intensify the oppression.

The Open Dialog Foundation hereby calls on representatives of the EP, OSCE, PACE, diplomatic missions of EU countries to Kazakhstan and the governments of democratic states to demand from Kazakhstan that it puts an end to the unlawfulness and immediately releases political prisoners. In particular, we ask that you support the following demands:

- to immediately release Vladimir Kozlov from solitary confinement;
- to stop the pressure and provocations against Kozlov; ensure his safety, proper medical care and conditions of detention in accordance with the recommendations of the medical professionals;
- to immediately allow representatives of the European Parliament, the diplomatic missions of the EU and human rights defenders into the colony to visit Vladimir Kozlov;
- to cancel the penalties, imposed on Vladimir Kozlov; to transfer him to milder conditions of detention, and subsequently, release him on parole;
- to recant the slanderous description of Kozlov formulated in line with the traditions of the Soviet repressive system.

You are welcome to support our statements by addressing the following persons and institutions:

- President Nursultan Nazarbayev - the Presidential Administration building 'Akorda', Left Bank, Astana 010000, Kazakhstan, fax: +7 7172 72 05 16;
- Head of State Institution 'The Penal Colony LA 155/14', Abylgazy Idilov - Almaty Province, Illiysky district, the Zarechnyy village, 040805;
- Commissioner for Human Rights in the Republic of Kazakhstan Askar Shakirov - 010000, Astana, Left Bank, House of Ministries, entrance No. 15; e-mail: ombudsman-kz@mail.ru, fax: +7 7172 740548;
- Chairman of the Committee of Penal Executive System of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Baurzhan Berdalin - 010000, Astana, 2 B.Maylina Street, tel. +7 7172 72-30-26, +7 7172 72-30-37. Application form: <http://kuis.kz/kz/otinishter>;
- Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kalmukhanbet Kasymov - 010000, Astana, 1 Prospekt Tauelsizdik. Tel. +7 7172 72-20-50, +7 7172 72-22-31, e-mail: Kense@mvd.kz;
- General Prosecutor of the Republic of Kazakhstan Askhat Daulbayev - 010000, Astana, House of Ministries, entrance №2, 14 Orynbor Street. Tel.: +7 7172 71-26-20, +7 7172 71-28-68;
- Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan Erlan Idrisov - 010000, Astana, Left Bank, 31 Kunayeva Street. Tel.: +7 (7172) 72-05-18, +7 (7172) 72-05-16, e-mail: midrk@mfa.kz;

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¹⁴ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getAllAnswers.do?reference=E-2015-002412&language=EN>

¹⁵ <http://freeassembly.net/rapporteurpressnews/statement-kazakhstan/>; <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getAllAnswers.do?reference=E-2014-007369&language=EN>