

To the OSCE, EU, Kazakhstan

I would like to fully support what has been said today by Mr. Millori, and on behalf of the Open Dialog Foundation I would like to express our regret and our deepest concern regarding the situation of the freedom of the media in Kazakhstan. This especially refers to the persecution of the independent media for shedding light on the events related to the strike movement in the Mangistau region, and for informing the international community about the tragic events in Zhanaozen and Shetpe in December 2011.

The information that we have proven clearly that independent editorials are persecuted merely for the fact that they covered the events in Zhanaozen, they spread information which was not comfortable for the authorities and made it known to the whole world.

We have been reported cases of pressure, threats, and attacks on journalists, particularly in October 2011 against the Stan.kz crew. However, the climax of repression against independent journalists was on January 23 this year, when the editor of "Vzglyad" was arrested, the newspaper offices were searched and journalists were interrogated on the case of terrorism. The fact which is particularly worrying is the rhetoric of prosecution in the trial of Vladimir Kozlov, the leader of the opposition party "Alga", where independent media are called an "extremist pool, which includes newspapers "Respublika" and "Vzglyad", TV-channels: K+ and Stan.kz.". Furthermore, not one request of the defense lawyers, to exclude evidence which was obviously falsified, was accepted.

By agreeing with the morning presentation by Ms. Mijatovic, I would like to emphasise and bring to the attention of the Kazakh authorities that you may not like independent media, but it's not a good reason for persecuting them and the more so, for killing them.

The case of the assassination attempt on Lukpan Akhmedyarov, the *Uralskaya Nedelya* daily, shows the vulnerability of journalists in Kazakhstan, and the impunity of their attackers.

We are afraid that the concerns of independent journalists would realise and that following oil industry workers and opposition leaders, the next wave of repression will fall fully on the independent media.

We urge the OSCE and the European community to pay closer attention to the situation with freedom of speech in Kazakhstan, and the Kazakh authorities to comply with their international obligations.

Lyudmyla Kozlovska, Open Dialog Foundation,

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