



## EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council 886**  
**Vienna, 03 November 2011**

### **EU statement on Kazakhstan**

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The European Union and its Member States would like to draw the attention of the Permanent Council to the following human rights and rule of law issues in Kazakhstan.

We regret the adoption in Kazakhstan of new legislation on religion, which is deemed by ODIHR in its 29 September press release to unnecessarily restrict freedom of religion or belief. The new legislation is at odds with Kazakhstan's international legal obligations and OSCE commitments in the field of freedom of religion and belief. We share concerns, *inter alia*, about the registration requirements imposed by the new legislation, the ban on unregistered religious activities, as well as the requirement for religious organisations to be examined by a government body.

We are also concerned that the new legislation was passed by Parliament without prior public debate. It is disappointing that it does not take into account ODIHR's 2009 legal opinion on an earlier version of the law, a version that was rejected by Kazakhstan's Constitutional Council.

We thank the delegation of Kazakhstan for the information provided to the Permanent Council on this matter on 13 October. We underline our conviction that efforts to prevent violent extremism and radicalism will only be effective if

they meet the international human rights standards. We urge the authorities of Kazakhstan to address concerns about the new legislation and, in doing so, we encourage them to seek the assistance of the ODIHR.

Kazakhstan is due to hold parliamentary elections in 2012 and we wish to underline the importance we attach to the free and fair conduct of these elections, in line with Kazakhstan's OSCE commitments. It is with concern that we have learnt of the ruling of an Almaty court on 4 October to suspend the activities of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan for six months, a verdict upheld on 24 October. We have noted claims that conditions for a fair trial were not fully met and that the ruling was politically motivated. We call on the authorities of Kazakhstan to promote conditions that will allow voters a genuine political choice in forthcoming elections

Mr Chairperson,

Let me take this opportunity to recall our concerns regarding the sentence against trade union activist Ms Sokolova, which was upheld in the first instance of appeal on 26 September. We reiterate our call for fair and transparent appeal process for Ms Sokolova and for Kazakhstan to uphold its international obligations and commitments in the fields of freedom of expression, association and assembly, including the right to organise and participate in trade union activities. The EU also expresses its concern about the situation of the striking employees, their families and their lawyers in Mangistau region.

We are also concerned about the physical assault on 26 October on two STAN TV journalists, Asan Amilov and Orken Bisenov, who were covering the oil workers' strike and the reported theft of the recorded video material of the strike. We note that a police investigation is ongoing and hope that the perpetrators will be identified and brought to justice.

The candidate countries CROATIA\*, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ICELAND\*\*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA and SERBIA, the European Free Trade Association country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

\*Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

\*\*Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and the European Economic Area.