



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Statement on Kazakhstan's Sentencing of Vladimir Kozlov**

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly  
the Permanent Council, Vienna  
October 11, 2012

The United States was disappointed to hear of the conviction of Vladimir Kozlov, leader of the opposition party Alga, and is concerned about the apparent use of the judicial system to silence a leading opposition voice in Kazakhstan. Mr. Kozlov, who was charged with "inciting social hatred" and "calling for the violent overthrow or change of the constitutional order" due to his support of striking oil workers in Zhanaozen last December, was sentenced to seven and a half years imprisonment and confiscation of property.

While we welcome the transparency of this trial compared to past proceedings in the country, we note that Kazakhstan's failure to afford Mr. Kozlov the minimum procedural guarantees required for a fair trial, in disregard of Kazakhstan's international obligations and OSCE commitments, casts serious doubt on its respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. Most importantly, the prosecution failed to produce concrete evidentiary links between Mr. Kozlov's support for the striking oil workers and the subsequent violence that occurred in Zhanaozen. Supporting the workers' strike should not be considered a criminal act.

The government's apparent use of the legal system to silence political opposition concerns us. The charge of "inciting social hatred" is problematic because it potentially constrains peaceful expression. A broadly defined charge such as this can also potentially be used to silence opposition activists, civil society organizations, and members of the media in Kazakhstan.

The United States deeply values our strategic partnership with the Republic of Kazakhstan and its stated commitments to greater openness and democracy. It is in this spirit that we call on Kazakhstan to implement its OSCE commitments fully, including by amending laws which can be used to stifle the freedom of expression that forms the bedrock of democracy and ensuring full respect for its citizens' fundamental rights of expression, association, and assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.