

23 September 2019

Statement of the Open Dialogue Foundation on WS 11: Rule of law II, including: prevention of torture, exchange of views on the question of abolition of capital punishment, protection of human rights and fighting terrorism

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

The application of torture in the prisons of Kazakhstan is a widely prevalent phenomenon. The authorities are ignoring information about torture from human rights advocates, preferring to use the information of prison officials, which does not conform to reality. The victims of torture are afraid to report breaches of the law, because this may threaten their life.

Since March 2019 human rights defenders have recorded at least 50 complaints regarding tortures and ill-treatment in Kazakhstani jails and detention facilities. The investigation was conducted only when victims of tortures have died or when the evidence of tortures cannot be hidden.

On 23 April 2019 Special Forces and National Guard troops went to the prison in Zarechny, Almaty region, for so called "inspection of prisoners", during which detainees were beaten and tortured. As a result 10 prisoners cut their veins in sign of protest. In the same colony political prisoner Aset Abishev was repeatedly beaten on the head.

Kazakhstani authorities are trying to hide facts of tortures. In 2018 human rights defender Elena Semenova was subjected to criminal prosecution for dissemination of information regarding tortures in Kazakhstan.

Russian prisoner Vitaly Buntov has been repeatedly tortured since 2010. In 2012 the European Court of Human Rights recognised the fact that torture had been used against Buntov and ordered Russian authorities to carry out new investigation. Unfortunately, none of those who tortured Vitaliy Buntov has been brought to justice.

On 12 September 2019 Russian lawyer Dmitry Sotnikov was beaten at the Novomoskovsk District Court of Tula. The Court officials forcibly prevented him from performing his professional duties, police officers transferred him to the Investigative Committee where lawyer was tortured by beating on the head and slamming a door shut on fingers.

The Open Dialogue Foundation urges OSCE participant states to publicly condemn acts of violations of basic human rights in Kazakhstan and Russia. We recommend the OSCE to organize regular monitoring missions to places of confinement in Kazakhstan and Russia. We call Russian authorities to investigate the use of physical force against prisoner Vitaly Buntov and lawyer Dmitry Sotnikov.

Thank you for attention,

Maksym Sytnikov