



## EUROPEAN UNION

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### EU statement on the case of Kazakhstani opposition members

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The European Union is concerned to learn of the verdict against the opposition politicians, Vladimir Kozlov and Serik Sapargali, and trade union activist, Akzhanat Aminov, on charges that included 'inciting social discord', 'calling for the violent overthrow or change of the constitutional order' and 'organizing and leading a criminal group'. Mr Kozlov, leader of the opposition party 'Alga!', was sentenced to seven and a half years imprisonment and confiscation of property. Mr Sapargali and Mr Aminov were given suspended sentences. In this regard, we recall the statement issued by the spokesperson of the EU High Representative on 9 October.

We also recall our previous statements about the need to conduct investigations and trials related to the Zhanaozen events with full respect for OSCE commitments, including as regards human rights and the rule of law. We also note the difficulties in conducting these trials in the absence of a clear and public account of events in Zhanaozen in December 2011.

While we welcome the degree of openness demonstrated by Kazakhstan with regard to these events and the opportunity to freely observe the trial, we note the several shortcomings in the judicial process and are concerned by aspects of the case against the defendants that appeared to criminalise political opposition activities, as well as alleged violations of due process standards.

We also note allegations that the trial was politically motivated and share the concerns that its outcome will have a stifling effect on wider opposition activities in Kazakhstan as well as on the legitimate exercise of freedom of expression and association. This is partly due to the unclear nature of some of the charges against the defendants.

The EU calls on Kazakhstan to ensure that the rights and freedoms of Mr Kozlov are fully upheld during any future appeal processes. We underline the importance we

attach to the full implementation of Kazakhstan's OSCE commitments and international obligations with regard to rule of law, democracy and human rights.

The Acceding Country Croatia\*, the Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, Montenegro\*, Iceland+ and Serbia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

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

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