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To: **The President of the Republic of Kazakhstan**
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As Members of the European Parliament, we note sharp deterioration of the situation with the freedom of speech, the freedom of assembly and association in Kazakhstan. According to data of human rights organisations, now in Kazakhstan there are more than 25 people convicted on politically motivated charges. They were convicted for public criticism of the authorities, for participating in peaceful rallies, for civil and trade union activities, for conducting journalistic investigations, for publishing and sharing posts on social networks.

17 political prisoners **are being held in Kazakhstani prisons**. Civil society activists **Maks Bokayev** and **Talgat Ayan** received prison term for participating in peaceful rally. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention recommended that the Kazakhstani authorities immediately release Bokayev and Ayan. Dissident **Aron Atabek** has been held in different prisons in harsh conditions for 10 years. Trade union activists **Amin Eleusinov** and **Nurbek Kushakbayev** have been sent to prison for their legitimate work to protect labour rights. Independent trade unions in Kazakhstan have been destroyed. Prison terms for **Sanat Bukenov** and **Edige Batyrov** became examples of neutralization of activists who air problems in the regions.

All influential non-state media in Kazakhstan are closed. Journalists **Seytkazy Matayev**, **Aset Matayev** and **Yaroslav Golyshkin** are in prison. Users of social networks (**Sanat Dosov**, **Ruslan Ginatullin**, **Igor Chuprina**, **Ernek Taychibekov** and **Igor Sichev**) have been sentenced to prison terms for hot political discussions on social networks.

The number of victims of criminal prosecution against opposition politician **Mukhtar Ablyazov** increased. In December 2016, the French Council of State recognized that persecution of Ablyazov had political nature. Interpol removed the names of Ablyazov and a few of his former colleagues from the wanted list. Now to obtain 'additional testimonies' against Ablyazov, Kazakhstan authorities prosecute relatives and Ablyazov's former colleagues (**Anatoliy Pogorelov**, **Tatiana Paraskevich**, **Viktor**, **Leila** and **Ilyas Khrapunov** and others). In these

cases, Kazakhstan has systematically abused the Interpol mechanisms and interstate cooperation on criminal cases.

Mukhtar Dzhakishev, a close friend of Mukhtar Ablyazov, is being held in one of the most strict regime penal colonies in Kazakhstan. Dzhakishev is at a constant risk of stroke and ischemia. He needs urgent hospitalisation in a public clinic. Kazakhstan do not fulfil the decision of the UN Committee on the release of Dzhakishev.

In October 2017 businessman **Muratkhon Tokmadi** was sentenced to 3 years in prison. Representatives of special services demanded that Tokmadi 'confess' that he allegedly committed 'a murder which was ordered by Ablyazov'. Tokmadi's wife informed that he had been tortured in the detention centre. But the General Prosecutor's Office stated that Tokmadi had 'fell off a pull-up bar'. Moreover, authorities left Tokmadi without counsels, since the prosecutor's office withdrew them from the case. Also, investigators threatened **Dzhamilia Aimbetova-Tokmadi**, Tokmadi's wife, with criminal prosecution.

8 people have received **suspended sentences** on politically motivated charges: civil society activists **Olesya Khalabuzar**, **Alima Abdirova** and **Bolatbek Blyalov**; trade union activist **Larisa Kharkova**; journalists Zhanbolat Mamay, Gyuzal Baydalina, Amangeldy Batyrbekov and Bigeldy Gabdullin. Courts banned them engage in the civil society or journalistic activities.

The practice of using 'punitive psychiatry' in Kazakhstan cause concerns. Counsel **Zinaida Mukhortova**, who earlier was kept in different mental hospitals, is still obliged to report doctors. Activist **Natalia Ulasik** has been forcibly held in a mental hospital for a year already.

Abovementioned facts are examples of gross neglect by Kazakhstan of its international obligations on observance of freedom of speech, the freedom of assembly and association. We urge Kazakhstani authorities to release political prisoners, stop politically motivated criminal prosecutions and exclude explicit politically motivated articles from the Criminal Code ('inciting social discord', 'libel', 'dissemination of knowingly false information', 'knowingly false denunciation', 'provoking people to participate in an illegal strike').

Our firm position is that fulfillment of these requirements is the condition for ratification of the EU-Kazakhstan Partnership Agreement.

Yours sincerely,

Members of the European Parliament

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