



OPEN DIALOG

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Brussels, 4 May, 2015

**Mr Martin Schulz,
President of the European Parliament**

Dear Mr President,

I am addressing you on behalf of the Open Dialog Foundation in order to draw your attention to the recent presidential election in the Republic of Kazakhstan and the participation in it, as international observers, of several Members of the European Parliament.

On 26 April, 2015, Kazakhstan held the early presidential election originally scheduled for 2016. The result was a victory of incumbent President Mr Nursultan Nazarbayev, who has been holding the office for over 25 years. According to the results issued by the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Kazakhstan Mr Nazarbayev received 97,7% of the casted votes, with 95,22% voter turnout.¹

In accordance to the information provided by the official Kazakh media, election was observed by several international observers, including several Members of the EP. Their general statements after the election are kept in a positive note, indicating on 'the victory of democracy in Kazakhstan and high level of election procedures'.

As a non-governmental organization dedicated to promotion, support and protection of human rights, democracy and rule of law in the post-Soviet area, we would like to remind that the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) statement after the election clearly points out that "[the] incumbent and his political party dominate politics, and there is a lack of a credible opposition in the country", as well as "[v]oters were not offered a genuine choice between political alternatives". Moreover, "[t]here were significant restrictions to the freedom of expression, as well as to the media environment."² Additionally, the statement by the Spokesperson of the European External Action Service (EEAS) urges Kazakh authorities to "effectively address (...) shortcomings, as well as other restrictions and irregularities observed by the OSCE/ODIHR".³

According to the 2015's edition of the ranking prepared by Freedom House, Kazakhstan is not a free country with a low freedom rating - 5,5; civil liberties rating - 5 and political rights rating - 6 (1 - best, 7 - worst).⁴ Also the newest 2015 report by the Human Rights Watch shows clearly that human rights and basic freedoms are under a serious risk in the country.⁵ The repression of

¹ http://election.kz/portal/page?_pageid=153,2281087&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

² <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/kazakhstan/153521>

³ http://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/2015/150427_02_en.htm

⁴ <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2015/kazakhstan#.VUdOpJPam1l>

⁵ <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/Kazakhstan>



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political opponents, independent journalists and civil society activists like Mr Vladimir Kozlov, Mr Vadim Kuramshin, Mr Aron Atabek and Mr Mukhtar Dzhakishev, as well as the lack of adequate investigation after the tragic events in Zhanaozen in 2011, do not leave any illusions what is the current position of Kazakhstan.

In the opinion of the Foundation, the early presidential election resembles a staged play under the facade of democracy. Uncompetitive elections are a way for Mr Nazarbayev to consolidate autocratic power. On the eve of the election, the president's political opponents are either in prison or in exile; independent media outlets are closed, activists are intimidated, and any civic activities may result in criminal liability.

The EU as one of the major investors in Kazakhstan cannot, once again, allow the actions of the Kazakh authorities to go unnoticed without any legal or political consequences. The lack of a clear position on the deteriorating human rights situation in Kazakhstan will lead to further preservation of the authoritarian regime, which will translate into the loss of a reliable and predictable economic and political partner for the EU. The EP should not only take a strong position on human rights deterioration in Kazakhstan in the resolutions but also to reflect it in its and its Members' actions.

Mr President, therefore, we would like to ask if Members of the EP who participated in the presidential election in Kazakhstan as international observers acted under the official EP electoral mission? What kind of measures do you plan to use in order to ensure that a good reputation of the EP as a promotor of democracy and a defender of human rights will not be undermined?

In the attachment please find a full version of the Foundation's statement on the presidential election in Kazakhstan.⁶

Sincerely yours,

Lyudmyla Kozlovska
President of the Open Dialog Foundation

⁶ <http://en.odfoundation.eu/a/6309,kazakhstan-stage-managed-elections-against-the-backdrop-of-the-authorities-crackdown-on-dissent>