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KAZAKHSTAN: THE COURT ISSUED DECISION ON EARLY RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONER VLADIMIR KOZLOV

On 4 August, 2016, the Kapshagai City Court of Almaty Province ordered the conditional release of opposition politician Vladimir Kozlov. The court decision will come into force in 15 days.¹

Famous Kazakh opposition politician Vladimir Kozlov was sentenced to imprisonment for supporting Zhanaozen oil workers who were shot by the police on 16 December, 2011. The politician represented the interests of the strikers in the European Parliament, European Commission, OSCE and the Polish Sejm; for his actions, he was subjected to criminal prosecution. Upon his return from Brussels, on 23 January, 2012, he was immediately arrested and labelled as the one who 'provoked' the Zhanaozen tragedy 'at the instruction' of opposition politician Mukhtar Ablyazov.

On 8 October, 2012, Vladimir Kozlov was sentenced to 7.5 years' imprisonment, having been convicted of 'inciting social discord', 'calling for the violent overthrow of the constitutional order' and 'establishing a criminal organisation'. On the basis of this sentence, the activities of the opposition party 'Alga' and 34 influential non-state media have been banned in Kazakhstan. They were accused of 'inciting social discord'. The international community has recognised the verdict against Vladimir Kozlov as unfair and politically motivated².

For more than 4.5 years, Vladimir Kozlov has been held in custody. He has been subjected to ill-treatment, and his health condition has deteriorated significantly. From December 2012 to March 2014, Kozlov was illegally detained in prison which wasn't located near his place of residence – in Petropavlovsk (Kazakhstan Siberia). In March 2014, the political prisoner was transferred to a colony in the Zarechnoye village (Almaty Province). For some time, Kozlov was held in solitary confinement, and on 27 July, 2015, he was transferred to a unit with strict conditions of detention, where he was held for over a year.³

In the period between December 2015 and February 2016, Kazakh courts have repeatedly denied the transfer of Kozlov to the usual conditions of detention and his release on parole. On 2 August, 2016, he eventually achieved his transfer to the usual conditions of detention, and subsequently, on 4 August, 2016, the court granted his petition for early release.

For several years, the UN, the European Parliament, the OSCE, the United States, international human rights organisations have repeatedly appealed to the Kazakh authorities, demanding an early release of political prisoner Vladimir Kozlov. We hereby call on the international community to closely monitor the execution of the court decision to release Vladimir Kozlov.

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¹ http://www.bureau.kz/novosti/sobstvennaya_informaciya/zaklyuchennyi_politik_vladimir_kozlov_vykhodit_na_udo

² <http://en.odfoundation.eu/a/1297,court-proceedings-in-the-case-of-vladimir-kozlov>

³ <http://en.odfoundation.eu/a/6763,a-fourth-birthday-in-prison-authorities-create-unbearable-conditions-of-detention-for-kozlov>