



Raids and arrests in Almaty after the departure of election observers

Oslo/Almaty 25 January 2012. The Norwegian Helsinki Committee is disappointed to learn of raids and arrests of opposition politicians and journalists in Almaty, Kazakhstan on 23 January 2012. The arrests are connected to the ongoing investigation of the events in Zhanaozen on 16 December 2011.

- Authorities seem intent on cracking down on remaining opposition rather than to carry out a transparent investigation to establish responsibility for the many deaths during these tragic events, says Secretary General of the Norwegian Helsinki Committee Bjørn Engesland. - We note with disappointment that this development comes immediately after the Parliamentary elections, during which the OSCE reported serious obstacles to the work of the country's opposition.

On 23 January, the security services of Kazakhstan carried out a number of raids on the offices and residences of opposition politicians and one opposition newspaper in Almaty. According a press release from the security services, these raids were connected to the case of one of the Zhanaozen activists, Ayzhangul Amirova, who is already under criminal investigation.

The head of the Alga political party, Vladimir Kozlov, the editor of Vzglyad newspaper Igor Vinyavskiy and opposition politician Serik Sapargli are all currently held in detention after lengthy interrogations. While the exact basis for the charges remain unclear, preliminary reports indicate that they are likely to be facing charges of inciting social unrest, a charge that could carry several years of imprisonment.

Other activists have also been interrogated and are likely to face charges.

- As a country of international ambition, Kazakhstan cannot continue to disregard the fact that civil and political rights are an inherent part of any modern and democratic state, said Engesland. – We have noted that documents to release our friend Evgeniy Zhovtis were submitted to court by the prison colony on 25 January. While this is a positive move, we urge the authorities to continue in the same vein by releasing opposition figures currently held in detention.

The Norwegian Helsinki Committee joins the international community in calling for a thorough and transparent investigation of the tragedy of Zhanaozen.

For more information:

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The Norwegian Helsinki Committee was established in 1977 and is an independent human rights organisation working to promote respect for human rights in Norway and internationally. We have a particular focus on the OSCE member states. We work through monitoring and reporting, project cooperation and human rights education. For more information see our homepage www.nhc.no and on Twitter: @nhc_no

