

URGENT ACTION

PRISONER AT RISK OF LOSING EYESIGHT

Kazakhstani activist and blogger, Muratbek Tungishbayev risks losing sight in his left eye due to the penitentiary authorities' failure to provide him with necessary medical care following surgery he had on his eye. He remains held in pre-trial detention in Almaty, on politically-motivated charges and requires urgent surgery immediately in order to save his sight. Amnesty International considers Muratbek Tungishbayev to be a prisoner of conscience.

Muratbek Tungishbayev is a Kazakhstani civil society activist and blogger who has been living in Kyrgyzstan. He was detained on 10 May 2018 in Kyrgyzstan following an extradition request from the Kazakhstani authorities a few hours after having undergone surgery on his left eye. As a result, he did not receive the necessary post-operative care and treatment. On 26 June, the Kyrgyzstani authorities extradited him to face trial in Kazakhstan on charges of "providing information services to a criminal group" (Article 266 of the Criminal Code) and "participating in the activities of an organisation after its recognition as extremist" (Article 405 of the Criminal Code) and he was detained. The alleged criminal group in question is the unregistered opposition party, Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan which was recognised an extremist organization on 13 March 2018 by Yesilskiy Court, in the capital Astana, in arbitrary proceedings initiated by the Prosecutor's Office. Amnesty International believes the charges against the activist to be politically-motivated and in retaliation for the peaceful expression of his views, including his support for the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan.

On 10 August, it was reported that Muratbek Tungishbayev's eyesight had deteriorated in his left eye, and that he was experiencing constant pain and headaches. On 22 August, his wife reported that he had lost all sight in his left eye and he was transferred from the detention facility to an eye clinic where doctors stated that he needed urgent surgery and in-patient treatment to save the sight in his eye. Instead, he was transferred back to the detention facility. His family have asked that he be transferred to the clinic so that he can receive the essential treatment he requires. The prison authorities have not responded.

1) TAKE ACTION

Write a letter, send an email, call, fax or tweet:

- Immediately and unconditionally release Muratbek Tungishbayev, as he is a prisoner of conscience held solely for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression and association;
- Pending his release, immediately provide adequate medical treatment to Muratbek Tungishbayev according to the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Mandela Rules), Rule 27.

Contact these two officials by 5 October 2018:

Minister of Internal Affairs
Kalmukhanbet Kasymov– 010000
Astana
Prospekt Teuelsizdik 1
Republic of Kazakhstan
Email: kense@mvd.kz
Salutation: Dear Minister

Ambassador Erzhan Kazykhanov
Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan
1401 16th St NW, Washington DC 20036
Phone: 202 232 5488
Email: washington@mfa.kz -OR- kzconsuldc@gmail.com
Twitter: [@KazakhEmbassy](https://twitter.com/KazakhEmbassy)
Salutation: Dear Ambassador

2) LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION

[Click here](#) to let us know if you took action on this case! *This is Urgent Action 157.18*

Here's why it is so important to report your actions: we record the actions taken on each case—letters, emails, calls and tweets—and use that information in our advocacy.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan party was set up by a group of then-prominent politicians and business leaders in 2001 and has repeatedly been refused registration by the Kazakhstani authorities. On its web-site the group calls for the abolition of the post of president, and the establishment of a parliamentary republic, amongst other things.

Amnesty International has already documented the severe restrictions on freedom of expression in Kazakhstan, including in a report published in 2017, Think before you post: Closing down social media space in Kazakhstan (AI EU57/5644/2017). The organization documented how the authorities are now working to “close down” social media as a space where people in Kazakhstan can exercise their right to express critical opinions, and where they can seek and receive a wider range of information from different sources. This latest wave of arrests and warnings is a seemingly blatant attack on freedom of expression.

One of the founding members of the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan party, Mukhtar Ablyazov, is a former government minister and chairperson of BTA Bank, who fled Kazakhstan when the Kazakhstani authorities took over BTA bank in 2009 and accused him of financial crimes. He currently lives in exile in France and has been the subject of extradition proceedings there.

Since 13 March, when the opposition party Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan was declared an extremist organization, dozens of people have been called in for questioning by the police and some have been detained. Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action on the case of Akmaral Kobylowa who has now been released for medical reasons but remains charged with financing an extremist organization, merely for browsing Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan’s website (see: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur57/8236/2018/en/>).

Name: Muratbek Tungishbayev
Gender m/f: m

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