

Brussels, 3 November, 2015

**Mr François Hollande,  
President of the Republic of France**

Palais de l'Elysée  
55, rue du Faubourg-Saint-Honoré  
75008 Paris, France

Dear Mr President,

As Members of the European Parliament, we request your utmost attention to the urgent matter of Mr Mukhtar Ablyazov, Kazakh businessman and dissident, co-founder of the opposition Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (later Alga!) political party, and financier of other democratically oriented media and civil society movements in the country.

We have learnt with disbelief that despite a wide international recognition of political background and support in Mr Ablyazov's case, on 17 September, 2015 the Prime Minister of France agreed to sign the extradition decree allowing for his extradition to Russia. As the voices of many parliamentarians – including ours, and human rights defenders from the European Union, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine – i.a. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, FIDH, ACAT, Memorial, and the Open Dialog Foundation were ignored, we have decided to approach you, Mr President, to intervene in this case and stop the extradition.

As we underlined in our letter from 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2015, addressed to the French Prime Minister, Mr Manuel Valls, Mr Ablyazov is currently the only serious political opponent, and therefore, political threat to the long-time Kazakh president, Mr Nursultan Nazarbayev.

With another leading opposition figure, Mr Vladimir Kozlov, leader of the banned opposition political party Alga!, in prison, sentenced to 7,5 years of incarceration, extensive campaign silencing critical media, including “Respublika”, and harassing journalists, there is basically no space left in Kazakhstan for regime opponents or even uncensored information.

Kazakh authorities, along with its Russian and Ukrainian counterparts, accuse Mr Ablyazov of allegedly embezzling 6 billion \$, during the time he was chairing the BTA Bank, which has since been forcibly nationalised by the Kazakh government. However, we would like to remind you that Mr Ablyazov was granted political asylum in the United Kingdom in 2011, and countries such as Austria, the Czech Republic, Italy, Poland, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom recognised the political background of related cases, providing Mr Ablyazov's family members and ex-colleagues with international protection.

We believe that neither Russia nor Ukraine can be treated as full guarantees of Mr Ablyazov's safety. In our opinion, Mr Ablyazov cannot be assured an independent trial, avoid ill treatment and refoulement to Kazakhstan from both of these countries. Russian and Ukrainian investigators involved in Mr Ablyazov's case are responsible for other politically motivated

cases in these countries, several of them on the Magnitsky list or on the US sanctions list. Additionally, information revealed by the lawyers of Mr Ablyazov, including Mr Mark Feygin, as well as by local civil society activists indicating that campaign of persecution of Mr Ablyazov's family members and associates around European countries, including extradition requests in Russia and Ukraine, have been directly orchestrated and financed by the Kazakh authorities, remain extremely worrying.

Bearing in mind the great respect for human and civil rights in France, as well as taking into account numerous violations of the international agreements and rule of law in Russia, which France has recognised in its decision to withhold the supply of Mistral warships to Russia, and which has been again demonstrated in the assassination of an opposition politician, Mr Boris Nemtsov, the case of extradition of Mr Ablyazov is of crucial importance.

We hope that you and the French authorities will take into account the information provided in this letter, regarding particularly the direct and illegal involvement of the Kazakh authorities, and finally revoke the decision regarding Mr Ablyazov's extradition to Russia and grant him international protection.

Sincerely yours,

Elena Valenciano  
Chair of Subcommittee on Human Rights  
Group of Socialists and Democrats

Marju Lauristin  
Group of Socialists and Democrats, Vice-Chair

Fernando Maura Barandiarán  
Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, Vice-Chair

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CC:

Mr Manuel Valls, Prime Minister of the Republic of France

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