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Ms Ana Gomes MEP  
European Parliament  
Brussels

*Dear Ana*

I would like to thank you for the joint letter on the removal of judges from office in Kazakhstan. We are aware of the recent case of Mr Malik Kenzhaliyev, Chairman of the City Court in Aktau. The EU Delegation in Astana is carefully following developments on the ground in relation to this case, but also the individual cases of Ms Aigul Akberdiyeva and her husband, Mr Ablovas Dzhumaev.

At the EU-Kazakhstan Human Rights Dialogue and Justice and Home Affairs Sub-Committee held in Brussel on 20 and 21 November 2018 respectively, the importance of an independent judiciary and of legislative powers to ensure the effectiveness of the constitutional mechanisms of checks and balances was underlined. We also handed over a list of individual cases containing among others Ms Akberdiyeva's and Mr Dzhumaev's names. Furthermore, during the EU-Kazakhstan Cooperation Committee, held on 30 January 2019 in Brussels, the recently adopted Law on the Attorneys and Legal Aid was raised. The EU regretted the fact that Kazakhstan has not taken into account the legal opinions of the OSCE/ODIHR and the Council of Europe on the draft law which were critical of excessive interference of the executive into the independence of the legal profession. It was agreed that the EU Delegation and Kazakhstan would follow up on these specific concerns.

The rule of law will remain a key priority sector of support for the EU in Kazakhstan through the new regional EU-Central Asia Rule of Law programme which will begin in 2019. Kazakhstan is also a beneficiary of thematic-funded projects in the field of Human Rights and Democracy under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). Currently, there are eight on-going EIDHR and non-state actor projects.

I assure you that we will continue to raise the issue of prosecutions against activists and journalists and the use of legal restrictions on freedom of assembly, and urge Kazakhstan to adhere to its international commitments.

Yours sincerely,

*Federica Mogherini*

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