



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1129  
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**EU statement on the sentencing of Max Bokayev and Talgat Ayan**

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The European Union has learned with concern that following an appeal hearing on 16-17 January 2017, the Atyrau City Court in Kazakhstan has upheld the five year sentence imposed on human rights defenders Max Bokayev and Talgat Ayan for organizing and participating in peaceful protests in April 2016.

The European Union shares the concerns that UN Special Rapporteurs on the situation of human rights defenders, on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, and on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, have raised regarding the fairness of the legal process and of the charges brought against Mr. Bokayev and Mr. Ayan.

The European Union calls for the release of Mr. Bokayev, and of Mr. Talgat Ayan. We also call for Kazakhstan to cease the criminalization of dissenting opinions and to ensure that human rights and fundamental freedoms are fully respected.

We continue to call on the Kazakh authorities to address OSCE/ODIHR recommendations and lift the restrictive legal provisions on freedom of assembly, in accordance with its OSCE commitments, and to make use of ODIHR's expertise and guidelines on freedom of assembly.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

\* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.