

Statement of the Open Dialogue Foundation on the working session 9: Humanitarian issues and other commitments, including: combating trafficking in human beings, refugees and displaced persons, persons at risk of displacement

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

One of the fields of activity of the Open Dialogue Foundation is protection of political refugees and asylum seekers from undemocratic states. Very often political refugees from the post-Soviet countries are seeking asylum in Ukraine, whose authorities declare adherence to democratic values, but in reality cooperate with regimes in extradition issues.

Political refugees often became victims of kidnapping and expulsion from Ukraine. Turkish citizens Salih Zeki Yigit and Yusuf Inan were kidnapped by Ukrainian Security Service and expelled to Turkey in 2018.

Ukrainian Migration Service systematically denies the granting of asylum or subsidiary protection to those persecuted.

In December 2018 Ukrainian Migration Service had refused to grant refugee status to Kazakhstani opposition journalist Zhanara Akhmetova, despite the fact that the Supreme Court of Ukraine ordered the migration service to reconsider its first negative decision. Yesterday District Administrative Court of Kyiv had refused to oblige the Migration Service to grant asylum to Akhmetova. Since 2017 Akhmetova is under the threat of being extradite or expelled from Ukraine to Kazakhstan where she faces imprisonment and tortures.

Russian political refugee Alexey Vetrov unsuccessfully trying to be granted refugee status in Ukraine since 2014. The Migration Service of Ukraine denied the granting of asylum, citing that Russia is a 'democratic state, governed by the rule of law', where he won't be facing any threats.

The Open Dialogue Foundation urges the Ukrainian authorities, in particular the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, to pay attention to the case of Zhanara Akhmetova, Ardak Ashym and other political refugees from Kazakhstan, Russia and other undemocratic states. Ukraine has declared its European and prodemocratic way. We welcome the declarations of president Zelensky regarding political refugees from Russia. We ask the authorities of Ukraine to fulfill these declarations according to international human rights obligations and do not assist authoritarian regimes in the persecution of dissidents and opponents of the regime.

Thank you for your attention,

Maksym Sytnikov