

Statement of the Open Dialogue Foundation on working session 2: Fundamental freedoms (continued), including address by the OSCE representative on Freedom of the Media: Freedom of expression, free media and information

Ladies and Gentlemen,

All-encompassing propaganda is one of the largest problems of media environment and public life in Kazakhstan. Virtually all media outlets are dependent on the authorities and that is why they portray their representatives in an extremely positive light. Sadly, the reality is completely opposite to that picture.

Kazakh government is trying to control all the information space, even the Internet, which they block almost on a daily basis. On 9 June 2019, on the day of the presidential election, Internet providers totally cut the Internet access for most users in the country. Within a few days, at least 4 000 unguilty peaceful protesters were detained. At least 12 of them were journalists who were covering protests.

Propaganda in Kazakhstan is powerful and affects also international fora. Yesterday, some of you could see how the Kazakhstani delegation reacted to a set of basic facts and numbers related to the political prosecution in the country.

I would like to remind that HDIM is a place where NGOs present their findings and observations. Yesterday, after doing exactly this, I was attacked by the Kazakhstani propaganda myself. Instead of referring to the merits of my speech, I was insulted, alongside the Open Dialogue Foundation, as allegedly paid by the Kazakh businessman and exiled oppositionist. That's obviously false. My organisation issued several statements on this topic. Our President, Mrs Kozlovska, has a resident permit in Belgium, and she was removed from SIS by Poland in June 2019.

I dare to speak about the situation of the Kazakh civil society as we have received over 2 000 requests for help from prosecuted Kazakh citizens. Our reports cover hundreds of their cases. We monitor situation of at least 21 political prisoners and hundreds of people who are under threat of detention, arrest, torture and long-term imprisonment. Only today morning at least 4 activists were detained in Nur-Sultan to prevent them from participation in peaceful protest.

The Open Dialogue Foundation demands Kazakhstani government to fulfill all international obligations, to release political prisoners, to stop politically motivated prosecutions and violations of the freedom of expression. We call the OSCE member states to monitor the situation with human rights in Kazakhstan and to react on violations of fundamental political and social freedoms of its citizens.

Thank you for attention,

Maksym Sytnikov