



United States Mission to the OSCE

Concern about Independent Media in Kazakhstan

As delivered by Deputy Permanent Representative Kate Byrnes to the
Permanent Council, Vienna
October 13, 2016

We are concerned about constraints on independent media and the implications for freedom of expression in Kazakhstan, as indicated by the criminal convictions and sentences in the case against Seitkazy Matayev and his son, Aset Matayev. The Matayevs were sentenced to six and five years in prison, respectively, and fined over \$1.5 million for fraud and tax evasion, including seizure of their personal property. Their convictions and the legal proceedings that led to them raise serious questions about whether the minimum fair trial guarantees required under Kazakhstan's international obligations were ensured.

Seitkazy Matayev is the owner and founder of the National Press Club and KazTAG, an independent news agency, and the president of the Kazakhstan Union of Journalists. Aset Matayev is general director of KazTAG. Those who have worked with them speak of their work with respect and credit them with important contributions to the development of independent media in Kazakhstan.

Access to diverse sources of information and opinions is an essential element of any democracy. We share international concern over the decreasing space for independent media in Kazakhstan. In the spirit of the U.S. partnership with Kazakhstan, we call on the Government of Kazakhstan to uphold freedom of expression and fair trial guarantees for everyone as fundamental to democracy.

Thank you, Madam Chair.