



AFL-CIO

AMERICA'S UNIONS

**American Federation
of Labor and
Congress of Industrial
Organizations**

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July 18, 2019

Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, President

Republic of Kazakhstan

Government House

Mangilik Yel st. 6

Astana City, Kazakhstan

via Embassy of Kazakhstan in Washington, washington@mfa.kz

Dear President Tokayev:

I write on behalf of the 12.5 million members of the AFL-CIO to strongly condemn the sentencing this week of Erlan Baltabai, leader of the Fuel and Energy Workers' Union, the latest manifestation of ongoing persecution of independent trade union leaders in Kazakhstan. We are deeply troubled to learn that Mr. Baltabai was sentenced to seven years in prison and banned from exercising his right to engage in public life, in what appear to be spurious criminal proceedings in retaliation for his trade union activism and principled position in support of other leaders of the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions of the Republic of Kazakhstan (KNPRK).

This is the most recent case in an ongoing pattern of government repression of labor rights leaders, including former KNPRK President Larisa Kharkova, and criminalization of independent trade unions. It comes a month after the International Labor Organization (ILO) Committee on Applications and Standards determined Kazakhstan was systematically failing to respect fundamental labor rights and improperly curtailing the operation of independent unions. Kazakhstan has an obligation to uphold the fundamental rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining as a member of the ILO. Taking steps to afford international worker rights is also a condition of the country benefiting from preferential access to the United States market under our Generalized System of Preferences, a requirement the Government of Kazakhstan is currently failing to meet.

Letter to Kassym-Jomart Tokayev
July 18, 2019
Page two

The AFL-CIO demands the unconditional acquittal and release of Mr. Baltabai, and stands with others in the global labor movement to demand the Government of Kazakhstan make meaningful change to end anti-union practices and ensure independent trade union activists can exercise their fundamental rights.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cathy Feingold". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Cathy Feingold
AFL-CIO International Director

CF/CW/jp

cc:

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