

PUBLIC

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Fear for Safety / 'Disappearance'

21 September 1998

KAZAKSTAN

Mikhail Vasilyenko

There are fears for the safety of Mikhail Vasilyenko, advisor to the former Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, who was reportedly detained by police on 18 September 1998 on his way from the airport to the capital Astana. His whereabouts are currently unknown, but it is feared he may be detained at an investigation-isolation prison (SIZO) where he may be at risk of ill-treatment and torture.

Supporters and human rights organizations in Kazakhstan reported that despite making inquiries at all of the prisons in Astana and approaching the National Security Committee (KNB), the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the General Procuracy and the Presidential Administration, they had not been able to establish Mikhail Vasilyenko's whereabouts by 21 September.

According to reports, the car in which Mikhail Vasilyenko was travelling was stopped on the road from the airport to the nearby capital Astana by persons wearing police uniforms in the early morning of 18 September. The uniformed officers allegedly claimed that the car had been stolen. Mikhail Vasilyenko was detained and taken to the duty station of the regional directorate of internal affairs (UVD). It is not known what happened to the driver of the car. After several hours in detention, Mikhail Vasilyenko called his family to let them know what had happened to him. Since then no one has been able to establish his whereabouts. All police stations and UVDS contacted deny that Mikhail Vasilyenko was detained or that he is being held in one of the city's or region's SIZOs.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Mikhail Vasilyenko is advisor to the former Prime Minister of Kazakhstan and current President of the Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, Akezhan Kazhegeldin. He was on his way to the capital Astana to distribute draft amendments to the constitution and the law on elections commissioned by Akezhan Kazhegeldin to the President of Kazakhstan, members of the government and members of parliament. Akezhan Kazhegeldin claims that the detention of Mikhail Vasilyenko is yet another attempt to isolate him politically and to prevent his ideas from being widely publicized. In August, his former press officer was allegedly severely beaten outside his house in Almaty and his recent book on the political situation in Kazakhstan was barred from being published in Kazak.

In February, the chairman of the opposition "Workers' Movement", Madel Ismailov, was detained by police after a conference of political opposition groups and held incommunicado for several days before the authorities disclosed his whereabouts. He was reportedly beaten during his time in incommunicado detention.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in Russian, English or your own language:

- expressing concern at the detention of Mikhail Vasilyenko on 18 September 1998;
- urging that his whereabouts be immediately established and made known;
- urging that he be protected from any form of ill-treatment and that he be allowed immediate access to his family and legal representatives;

- stating that, should he be detained solely for exercising his fundamental right to freedom of opinion and expression he should be released immediately and unconditionally.

APPEALS TO:

Please note: fax tones can be difficult to obtain, particularly out of office hours when they may be switched off

1) Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakstan

Kairbek SULEYMENOV
Respublika Kazakhstan
g. Astana
Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del
Ministru SULEYMENOVU K.
KAZAKSTAN

Telegrams: Ministru vnutrennikh del, Astana, Kazakstan

Faxes: + 7 3172 34 17 38 This is a combined phone/fax number and you will need to ask for the fax signal

Salutation: Dear Minister

2) Procurator General of the Republic of Kazakstan

Stepan SHUTKIN
Respublika Kazakhstan
g. Astana
Prokuratura Respubliki Kazakhstan
Generalnomu prokuroru SHUTKINU S.
KAZAKSTAN

Telegrams: Generalnomu prokuroru, Astana, Kazakstan

Faxes: + 7 3172 32 18 67

Salutation: Dear Procurator General

3) Chairman of the Kazak Committee for National Security

Nardoo ABIKAYEV
Respublika Kazakhstan
g. Astana
Komitet natsionalnoy bezopasnosti
Predsedatelyu ABIKAYEVU N.

Telegrams: Predsedatelyu KNB, Astana, Kazakstan

Faxes: + 7 3172 32 80 50

Salutation: Dear Chairman

COPIES TO:

Chairman of the Presidential Human Rights Commission of the Republic of Kazakstan

Zhabaykhan ABDILDIN
Respublika Kazakhstan
g. Astana
Komissiya po pravam cheloveka pri Presidente Respubliki Kazakhstan
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President of the Republic of Kazakstan, Nursultan NAZARBAYEV

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and to diplomatic representatives of Kazakstan accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 2 November 1998.

"No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

Article 5, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Visit the Amnesty International UDHR campaign website on <http://www.amnesty.excite.com>