

URGENT ACTION

PRISONER DENIED SIGHT-SAVING TREATMENT

A female prisoner in Kazakstan, Inessa Karkhu, is not receiving essential medical treatment for glaucoma, a disease that progressively damages vision. If she is not treated immediately, she could end up losing her sight.



Inessa Karkhu, an accountant, is serving an eight-year prison sentence for fraud, handed down in 2007. She spent 10 months in pre-trial detention in Astana, Kazakstan's capital, during which time she says that her vision deteriorated. In February 2008 she was transferred to house arrest and was examined by an ophthalmologist who diagnosed her with glaucoma. She had an operation on her eyes in a public clinic the following month. However, according to her mother, a judge prevented Inessa Karkhu from visiting the clinic for post-operative treatment, and her sight deteriorated again. In July 2008 Inessa Karkhu was returned to the pre-trial detention centre in Astana. Her mother says that prison staff did not give her access to adequate treatment and that she had to rely on medication brought by her family. After Inessa Karkhu told her family that she was losing her vision, they arranged for an independent ophthalmologist to visit her. Tests carried out by the ophthalmologist confirmed that Inessa Karkhu had glaucoma and needed urgent medical treatment in order to save her sight. However, the prison authorities contested the independent medical findings and claimed that she did not need specialist medical care. In June 2009 Inessa Karkhu was transferred to a prison in Almaty, some 1,000 kilometres from Astana, which makes it very difficult for her family to visit and provide her with medication.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Kazakh, Russian, English or your own language;

- √ Urging the authorities to ensure that Inessa Karkhu receives immediate access to any medical treatment she may require, including surgery;
- √ Calling on the authorities to ensure that Inessa Karkhu be transferred to a public hospital with suitable facilities if no other hospital within the penitentiary system can meet her medical needs;
- √ Reminding the authorities that under international standards, everyone in custody should have access to appropriate medical care.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 17 NOVEMBER 2009 TO:

(Please note: Astana is five hours ahead of GMT, faxes maybe switched off outside office hours)

Minister of Justice

Tusupbekov Rashid Toleutaevich
Levi bereg reki Ishim Orinbor ul. 8
Dom Ministerstv, 13 podezd,
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Kazakstan
Fax: +7 7172 74 09 54
Email: news@minjust.kz

Salutation: Dear Minister

Prosecutor General

Mami Kairat Abdrazakovich
Seifullina ul. 37
10000 Astana
Kazakstan
Fax: +7 7172 712579
Email: gp-rk@mail.online.kz

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

And copies to:

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Kanat Bekmurzaevich Saudabaev
Levi bereg reki Ishim,
Kunaeva ul. 31
010000 Astana
Kazakstan
Fax: +7 7172 72 05 16
Email: midrk@mid.kz

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives of Kazakstan accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Inessa Karkhu was detained by six plain-clothed police officers on 17 April 2007 in Astana. According to her mother, who witnessed the incident, the officers knocked Inessa Karkhu to the ground and hit her head against the pavement, as well as punching her in the shoulders and neck. They also beat her mother when she rushed to her daughter's defence and injured her shoulder. Inessa Karkhu's mother told Amnesty International that the police officers threatened to hurt Inessa Karkhu's teenage daughter. As a result of these threats, Inessa Karkhu signed a paper saying that she physically resisted arrest and that she had no complaints against the police officers.

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