

GALYMZHAN ZHAKIYANOV: OVERVIEW OF INTERVIEWS AND PRESS ARTICLES

Bibliography



Galymzhan Zhakiyanov is a generally recognised leader of the Kazakh opposition. He was born on 8 May 1963 in the village Kuigan, East-Kazakhstan region. In 1986, he graduated from the Moscow Bauman Higher Technical Institute. In 1986-1989, he worked at the Semipalatinsk machine-building factory. In 1989, Zhakiyanov headed the Regional Youth Centres Association "Maksat". In August 1990, Zhakiyanov stated his private business. In June 1994, he was appointed head of the Semipalatinsk Oblast Administration by a presidential decree. In March 1997, he became chairman of the Strategic Resources Control Agency; the Agency was liquidated in August 1997. In December 1997, Zhakiyanov was appointed governor of the Pavlodar Oblast. In November 2001, Zhakiyanov founded the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DCK) public association. The association called for start of democratic reforms: decentralisation of the state authority, introduction of the local authority elections, reform of the electoral and judicial systems, and media freedom. Several days later, he was dismissed from his post. In February 2002, Zhakiyanov initiated conducting of the First General Conference of the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan association. In May 2002, he was charged with misappropriation. On 2 August 2002, the Pavlodar City Court sentenced Zhakiyanov to seven years in jail. Many human rights organisations, including International Bureau for Human Rights, International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Andrei Sakharov Foundation, Memorial Human Rights Centre, OSCE and others declared Zhakiyanov a political prisoner. Special resolution on Kazakhstan, adopted by the European Parliament on 13 February 2003 called the Kazakh authorities to immediately review politically inspired pseudo-criminal cases against Zhakiyanov and other activists of the democratic opposition. In September 2003, the European Parliament nominated 4 political prisoners in Central Asia, including Zhakiyanov, to receive Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought. On 14 January 2006, he was granted early conditional release.

Galymzhan Zhakiyanov: To Participate In The Commission In This Situation Is Immoral *March 24, 2006*

Political and social situation in country is checking everyone personally, especially those in the vanguard in this situation. The society is waiting what will happen next and understands – the evolution of the events mainly depends on the position of leading figures in political game. Galymzhan Zhakiyanov shares with his understanding of the current situation in Kazakhstan.

- In your opinion what were the aims of those issued an order on killings of Zamanbek Nurkadilov and Altynbek Sarsenbayev?

- Obviously the killings of Zamanbek Nurkadilov and Altynbek Sarsenbayev are the political ones. And aims are also obvious – to threaten the people and sow the fear in the country. But they did not achieve these aims. Today we can see on memorial meeting of Altynbek Sarsenbayev that many people are indignant and no one is intimidated. Finally many started to understand what the consequences of the repressions for dissidence are. This understanding consolidates the society.

- What is your reply on words of Dariga Nazarbayeva in 'Déjà vu' article, where she reminded the events of November 2001 and called all of you as nouveau riches and adventurers that are able to do anything in order to prevent the development of the democracy?

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- Firstly, it is not we who are able to do anything. It is a fact. Secondly, it is just a rude attempt of misinformation of the society. It is enough just to look through the independent press of those times and it will be obvious for all what had happened indeed. Let's remember who had disputed the development of the democracy in the country at that time, was against the appointment of the akims by election, the restriction of the power of president Nazarbayev and extension of the authorities of the Parliament? Who had suppressed the freedom of speech, persecuted the opponents of the regime, had seized business from Kazakh businessmen and carried out the extortion in the force and fiscal bodies of the state? And, finally, who "instilled" to our nationals that democracy is unacceptable for Kazakhstan since its nation is Asiatic? Is it enough? Or should I continue to list the true ideologies of that time of president family? Also the circumstances of the deaths of Altynbek Sarsenbayev and his aides mean a lot. Despite the fact that few persons connected with the crime are arrested, the question on true inspirer of this murder is still open. We have been told some details of the crime, on the basis of Utembayev's letter on his name (by an unidentified method) president of the country hastened to define him as a main guilty one. But still we are not provided with any persuasive evidences of such version, especially with regard to the motives of the crime. We are only proposed to believe that one official on account of personal enmity that took a loan in bank issued an order on the killing of three men. And these are the words of Minister of Internal Affairs. If the minister says so it appears then that either he is incompetent one or he has been told to say so. Since it is obvious that there have to be extraordinary motives for such killing of three people. Believe me since I have been imprisoned and I perfectly know the psychological portrait of killers and those order the killings. One has to be too naïve to believe the official version of the Ministry of internal affairs, which lacks the main thing – real motive of the crime. And if we will turn to the motives then it will appear that there are few people interested in this killing. But they have appeared beyond the investigation. I think that those that are either deliberately, thoughtlessly or due to other reasons hiding the information or hampering the disclosure of this crime appeared to be the criminals themselves. Everyone has to remember this, starting from the minister and ending by the investigators and operative officials. Estimation will be given to this in the near future and they will be called to account.

Nazarbayeva stated that chairman of National Security Committee Dutbayev had reported to President that his relatives – Rakhat Aliyev, Timur Kulibayev or Kairat Satybaldy – have taken direct participation in the killing of Sarsenbayev. In your opinion how president should behave oneself after such statement? Is it possible to ignore this report of the head of the competent bodies?

- Firstly, why such a panic grabbed president's daughter?

- I think that she has quite responsibly written her article and she won't refuse her words. I suppose she read this report of the chairman of NSC. And this made her panic. Apparently, there were some facts that are still not published but that are the reason to panic.

- And do you trust Dutbayev since NSC tried to open nine criminal cases upon you?

- It is hard for me to judge what the motives of his report were. Maybe due to the fact that this crime involves his officials that could mean that he is also involved. And I personally have made sure of that some officials in our state are able to cross the forbidden threshold. I am sure that killings of Zamanbek Nurkadilov and Altynbek Sarsenbayev were ordered. The silence of the president in regard to the report of Dutbayev only confirms this conviction.

- 40 days of thoughts after the death of Altynbek Sarsenbayev have gone. After your release you have much time to talk to him, he had waited for you very much and he had always been saying that we have to obtain your release above all. What are your feelings now when he is gone? In what manner his work should be continued?

- Death of Altynbek is an irreplaceable loss for us in all senses – as a friend, companion and person. I am not able to estimate the extent of this loss and it is impossible to fill up his place. Indeed Altynbek was very glad when I was released. As a former secretary of Security Council he knew the level of danger that this punitive system represents. He has worried for me very much. And then he died from this system. We have some plans of how to act further. And we came to understanding that a dialogue with the authority is possible when other mechanisms, such as fair elections, are not working. We told that now it is time to demand from Nazarbayev as a former presidential candidate

the fulfilment of his promises of political modernization of the country. And a dialogue could have helped to this. But the monstrous killing of Altynbek Sarsenbayev cancels everything. It is not the time for a dialogue and negotiations when we cannot see the answer on the main question that worries the society – who is the murderer? We do not have the moral right to negotiate with the authority until the full and convincing answers occur. There are many suspicions in the society on the belonging of the authority and circle of the president to these crimes. The executives are all officers of National Security Committee. How can we discuss the relations with the power at such an uncertainty and situation in the country?

Today I hear that opposition is proposed to participate in State commission – another NCDI (National Commission for Democratisation Issues) and another Permanent Council for Democratisation (PCD). That is this commission is created only in the interests of current regime and not of the people. Regime is imposing its own conditions that are beneficial for it, and at which the opposition and the nation again will not be heard. It is a regular imitation of that the process of political reforms exists in the country. Even on the level of preparation of the dialogue the joint decision should exist. What will be the format of the dialogue, its regulations of the decision-making in order for conversation to be efficient? Who will observe this dialogue to be fair? And if this is another commission under the control of the authority, and we have already seen this unsuccessful experience twice - semblance of the democratisation, then I personally not willing and consider it immoral in this situation to participate in the work of such commission.

- But the regime considers itself as a progressive power of the state, for example, taking into account its ambitions on chairmanship in OSCE, and here is the new idea – to be among 50 leading countries of the world.

- These initiatives of the president, if to analyse them, are of PR character. Beautiful idea on chairmanship in OSCE in 2009 was advanced, and it is exaggerated already for 2 or 3 years. But nothing has been done to deserve such a status. Have you noticed that it is absent in the last message of the president? Another beautiful idea is advanced instead – to be among the first 50 countries of the world. What does it mean? The authority gave up one idea and advances another while not undertaking anything in the sphere of democratisation of the country and not fulfilling even a minimum advanced by OSCE, which is free elections, human rights observance and free mass media. It turns out that they have advanced one idea after another without fulfilment of any. What is the developed country? It is not just the records on oil extraction per capita, but, above all, it is the index of protectability of a man – his high social, legal and political status. Here it is just rhetoric with the purpose to feed once again the people with the promises. As a citizen I welcome any good idea, but let's fulfil them altogether. I personally ready to work both on idea on chairmanship in OSCE and that Kazakhstan to be among the strongest nations in the world. But first of all it is necessary to make some concrete actions inside the country. Different ambitious economic programs existed in Kazakhstan – on import substitution, on distribution of the credits, on mortgage lending, social security, etc. And what are the results of this? Years of culture and health have been advanced. Where are the results? And no one is going to give an account for these programs, starting from akim of the village and ending with the prime minister and president of the country.

- What should the opposition do when there is no contact with the regime and when everyone says that a dialogue is needed?

- Real opposition is the opposition that represents the interests of the society. In order for opposition to be real it should address not to the regime but to the nation, to enlighten it politically and to increase the number of its supporters. This is what we call the development of civil society. This is the responsibility both of the authority and the opposition. Both the regime and the opposition address to the nation. And the nation has the right to choose one or another.

- Do you personally put the dialogue with the society higher than dialogue with Nazarbayev?

- Yes, of course. It has always been this way and in the history of Kazakhstan too. There were residents of Alash Orda, flower of our nation; they called the nation to the enlightenment. It was topical issue at the dawn of 20th century, and it is topical today, at the dawn of 21st century. But the regime, as before, doing its best to suppress the activity of the people. You can see the flow of

information on TV – estrangement from the important problems and issues existing in the country. It is an attempt to take everything under the total control and not to give any self-dependency to people to live free. That is why the task of the opposition is to teach and inspire people to achieve this freedom. Altynbek Sarsenbayev has worked for this when he joined the opposition. Yes, and it is his political testament, and I call all his supporters to fulfil his will. Our ideas were born in such difficult struggle, in which everything was included – blood and victims. Only by doing this we can immortalize his name and memory on him. Today on the meeting and on funeral repast there were proposals to name the streets of Almaty with the name of Altynbek Sarsenbayev; our writers advanced an initiative to create literary fund and journalistic prize of Altynbek Sarsenbayev. I think we should do this. It is a question of spiritual legacy of Altynbek and not of the necessity to erect monuments. It is a question of political legacy too.

Source: Svoboda Slova

Nazarbayev In The Grip Of Myths

March 15, 2006

On January 14, Almaty railroad station was overcrowded. Hero of the occasion was famous political prison of the country Galymzhan Zhakiyanov, who came back after four years of imprisonment. The leader of the most authoritative opposition movement 4 years ago - “Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan” that was deprived of registration during his absence - he not only retained his supporters, but also easily got involved in new political realities and processes occurring in the country.

- How did you manage it?

- I just did not stop pay attention to these processes for four years. I kept the bond with an outside world; I kept in touch – officially and unofficially – with my friends and supporters. Also I gave interviews and wrote articles. I was in the centre of life. Unfortunately I did not have the ability of full-fledged participation in deciding organizational matters related to the opposition. But I attentively observed all the trends. After creation of the DCK movement in 2001, the authorities decided to completely clean out political field from all kinds of dissent, and to make an illusion of opposition by imitating 2 or 3 political parties to be obedient and controllable. It did not work out. I believe that the authorities understood that opposition is necessary and it must exist as the main achievement of the last four years.

- How come the authority became so quick-witted?

- Most likely, it was just forced to realize it. It simply realized that opposition will exist, no matter if one wants it or not. The new main task of the regime is to maximally hamper the existence of this opposition. Legislation became tougher: now 50,000 members are needed to be gathered in order to register a new party. It is quite complicated, but real. However, even these parties are not registered under various pretexts. What came to me as the most notable after four years of absence is that the society is changing. More and more people understand the social and political situation in the country and think about the future - not only about the present day. Everybody is aware that the regime is busy with myth-making instead of solving vital issues.

- And what are those myths?

- First is a myth about political stability. How one can say about stability when two well-known opposition politicians – Zamanbek Nurkadilov and Altynbek Sarsenbayev – were killed within several weeks? And with all this going on, it is difficult to find those ordered these killings. It is a political crisis. In any other democratic country such crisis would be admitted and necessary measures would have been taken, including resignation of the government, not to mention resignation of separate ministers. Head of the state should have convened extraordinary session of the Parliament to discuss the current situation.

Second myth is about the so-called economic miracle. Actually, the economy is developing only by extraction of minerals. The main reserves of our hydrocarbons will be enough for nearly thirty years. In 1997, a state program called “Strategy-2030” was developed and presented very pompously. This document is believed to be a strategic plan of development for the whole country. In reality, the whole state strategy exclusively comes to an issue of extraction and transportation of the natural resources. Pay attention on the year 2030 – a year, when the aim will be allegedly achieved and the society will “prosper”.

In fact, this number implies the time when our depths will be exhausted, and the question of how to live further will stand on top of the agenda. The "Strategy-2030", advertised by the current authorities, is not answering other questions, for example, how to develop a competitive economy, how to use our wealth in a more rational way and how to ensure employment of the population. There is no mention on development of other, non-raw sectors of the economy, for example, processing industry, machinery construction and high technologies. This is a program of deindustrialization of the country, which is merely extracting its oil.

Real living standards of the population, especially in remote areas, are far from what is said by the Kazakh authorities. Especially one is aware of that contrast being in prison, when one sees that our colonies mostly are full of young people, which found themselves here not in view of their criminal origin, but due to the social and economic problems of the state. That is the reason why it is wrong to say about the economic miracle or prosperity of Kazakhstan against the background of such problems, absence of free competitive environment for businesses and endemic corruption on all levels of the state.

Third myth is about the statehood of Kazakhstan. Of course, we have external attributes of independence - we have anthem, National Emblem, flag, presidential residence, parliament, government... But, initially, the statehood starts with steady political system, which we do not have. There is no real democracy in Kazakhstan, and civil society institutions are very underdeveloped. Autocracy aggravates vulnerability of the young state, since all branches of power are concentrated in hands of one person, who is influenced by non-transparent internal and external forces. This leads to abruptness of the authority and vagueness of the perspectives.

Weakness of civil society was revealed by the recent presidential elections, in which fear has won. People were not simply a subject of agitation for Nazarbayev; they were a subject of thorough explanation that if one votes improperly, the punishment will immediately follow in the form of dismissal from the job. Heads of budgetary organizations received the orders of how many people must vote "properly". The most frightful and unpleasant is that teachers and other education workers were involved in this. They usually serve as members of the district election committees. What lessons they teach our children in the periods between elections? It is a crime against the future.

- You mentioned two political murders. But the law enforcement bodies claimed that investigation is carrying out successfully...

- If it can be called an investigation at all! The authorities are trying to portray the killing of Zamanbek Nurkadilov as a suicide. Can you imagine that an individual would shoot himself three times? Two shots in the area of the chest (through the pillow!!!), and one final shot in the head. No sane man would believe this! Nurkadilov stated many times that something similar may happen to him, since he came out several times with disclosure of corruption in the highest echelons of power. He was openly accusing president Nazarbayev, including the "Kazakhgate" case.

- It is appropriate remind that James Giffen, an American citizen and adviser to president Nazarbayev, was arrested three years ago in the United States. He was accused of bribing the highest leadership of Kazakhstan to promote interests of the oil giants. Giffen's defence did not deny that he had given bribes, but claims that he was acting in the interests of the U.S., being a CIA fixed-post spy, and that he reported on all of his actions to the CIA officials. Thus, the question for now is whether he had given bribes as a private person or on the instructions from CIA? Nurkadilov took part in the investigation and raised awareness of this case in the country.

- Absolutely right. The same situation is with the killings of Altynbek Sarsenbayev and his two colleagues. It was officially announced that their abductors are detained. Those were officials of the special services, who allegedly made it simply for money. Then the alleged person who contracted this killing was named, Yerzhan Utembaev, former head of the Senate administration. The reason for assassination was said to be a "deep personal enmity". Where did this enmity come from? Even when Altynbek Sarsenbayev worked in the government, his path never crossed with the Utembayev's. It is especially irrelevant for the time after Sarsenbayev joined the opposition. I know Utembaev personally, and I can state that he is not a blood-thirsty avenger. Moreover, according to the investigation, he took a bank credit and spent all of this money to kill a man, to whom he experienced "personal enmity" and two of his colleagues, whom he had not even known. Judge yourself, could it be a motive of the crime, in which the lives of three innocent people were ruined? In

my opinion, they want to portray this political killing as a usual criminal case, for which the authorities are not responsible.

Altynbek Sarsenbayev was not only my close friend and comrade-in-arms. We are of the same age and our destinies are similar in many respects. He also studied in Moscow as I did; he took up an important state post in early ages (when he was 31 years-old) as I did. He worked as Minister of Information, Secretary of the Security Council, and Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Russia. Two years ago he joined the opposition. He raised acute issues before Nazarbayev, including the issue of my release. He demanded democratization of the country. Being an outstanding personality and a talented man, he meant a lot for our nation. He was a true statesman, a staunch supporter of ideas of democracy and free society. It is an irreplaceable loss for the nation.

- What do you think about the possibility of dialogue between the power and opposition in Kazakhstan today?

- Dialogue is always possible. But responsibility for start of such a dialogue always lies on the authorities. It has all the resources needed, but lacks political will. For now we can see only an imitation of readiness to such a dialogue.

Source: Novaya Gazeta

Galymzhan Zhakiyanov: There Were Two Attempts On My Life In Prison

March 14, 2006

Presidential elections in Kazakhstan are already a matter of history, but names of the opposition leaders are always in the press. Last fall ex-mayor of Almaty Zamanbek Nurkadilov was shot in his house; in February, ex-ambassador of Kazakhstan to Russia Altynbek Sarsenbayev was slain. Recently, the Kazakh oppositionist Number One, Galymzhan Zhakiyanov has been released from the prison. He gave an interview to the *Versiya* Newspaper.

- You had been convicted on criminal charges, although everybody is convinced that you are a political prisoner. Why?

- It was a political order to imprison me. I was charged with misappropriation of 12 million tenge from the regional governor's reserve fund, i.e. the money that I, being a governor, could have spent for unplanned expenses. This was a totally groundless accusation, taking into account that I acted in full conformity with the legislation. It looks ridiculous against the background of billions that are being impudently stolen from the budget by top officials, against the background of notorious corruption scandals, which "glorified" the current leaders of Kazakhstan. In 2002, at the trial, my defenders fully proved my innocence and political motivation of the whole case. All trial materials were immediately posted on my website. All leading international human rights organizations unambiguously stated that my case is a political one. Besides, the European Parliament, U.S. Congress, governments of other democratic countries repeatedly addressed injustice of persecution against me in their resolutions. After almost four years of imprisonment I have been conditionally released. I had to be released on October 2, 2005, but they let me go only on January 14, 2006.

- What took you so long?

- On December 4, 2005, the presidential elections were taking place in Kazakhstan. It is believed that Nazarbayev was afraid that I could have taken part in the elections and influence their outcome. Before the elections, the colony administration told me that they would release me December 3. But in reality I was released only after inauguration of Nazarbayev. The fact that I was retained in prison for longer time once again proves that my case was politically inspired.

- Some say that you were released after promising Nazarbayev to quit politics ...

- These rumours are being spread by the special services of Kazakhstan in order to discredit me in the eyes of my supporters. I stay in the opposition and will never give up my convictions.

- Have you been forced to give them up?

- Certainly. Chiefs of the Kazakh special services visited me in the colony, including recently resigned (after political killing of A. Sarsenbayev) Chairman of KNB (National Security Committee) Dutbayev. They insisted and threatened me, saying that my family would be very unhappy if I refuse

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to quit politics. They threatened me with prolongation of imprisonment to ten more years, initiation of new criminal cases, making me stay in prison for life...

- Did they use harsher methods?

- No, if you mean tortures. I think they were afraid of publicity. International rights activists, several members of the Kazakh Parliament and opposition newspapers were by my side. The public was well informed about violations of my rights and about the overall situation around me. I think this saved me from physical elimination. Only support of my brothers-in-arms helped me survive.

- Was there a threat to your life?

- Yes, there was. One of the former officials of the Committee for Penitentiary System told me that he was directly commissioned with physical elimination of Zhakiyanov, which consequently has had to be presented as a "conflict of criminals in prison". There was an order to choose drug-abused criminals in prison, who were presumed to be somehow offended by me. According to this plan, I was an accidental victim of the criminals' knife-fight. This man refused to execute order and was dismissed.

Later I was informed of another provocation. Some convicts were to beat me with iron rods when I was sleeping. Fortunately, I learned about these plans and wrote an appeal to the colony chief saying that he would bear all responsibility for this provocation. In response, the colony chief put me into the punishment cell, considering it to be the safest place for me.

- On February 13, Altynbek Sarsenbayev, who actually led the democratic opposition in your absence. Is it a political killing?

- Undoubtedly. The authorities try to deny it - they proposed various versions, except political. There were allegations of hunting accident, personal motives, and business reasons. It was absurd for the people who knew Altynbek. When the supposed doers of the crime were arrested (acting officers of the KNB), it became senseless to insist on those versions. Then Minister of Interior stated that allegedly chief of the Senate administration Utembaev contracted the murder. He was arrested and "confessed" the murder was based on grudge and that he took a bank credit for organization of the killing. Now the authorities want the society to believe this! Everybody perfectly understands that this version is baseless: how cruel the man should be to assassinate three men for bygone nuisance. Meanwhile, Utembaev – I know him personally by work in the government – is an absolutely mild-mannered man, not an "avenger" as the authorities try to make out of him. The motive of personal grudge against Altynbek, with whom he never had particular professional or personal relations, is unconvincing, at least.

- Why Sarsenbayev was killed?

- It can be openly said that he was an unwanted person for the current authorities. He was one of the key figures of the Kazakh opposition, its ideologist and inspirer. We knew each other since mid-1990s, and we had much in common. We are coevals, born in the village, studied in Moscow. In 1993, Altynbek became the youngest minister, and I became the youngest governor. In 2001, we together created the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DCK) Movement. Altynbek did not come to the opposition right away. For a certain time it was decided that it would be more useful for the common cause if he stays on the post of Secretary of the Security Council of Kazakhstan. President Nazarbayev listened to him: Altynbek was bright and talented political analyst; he understood best how to develop the country.

When we created DCK, we hoped that Nazarbayev would accept our democratic program, but he did not. Nazarbayev categorically rejected political reforms and said that Kazakhstan is not ready for democracy. Then we came out against the current regime. On November 19, 2001, we openly stated our stand, and the next day Nazarbayev dismissed us. Shortly after that I was imprisoned, Altynbek was sent as far as possible from the president's administration – Nazarbayev appointed him ambassador to Russia. But Altynbek was a man of honour. When I was imprisoned and sent to the Kushmurun prison, he resigned, became co-chairman of the "Ak Zhol" party and urged the authorities to release me. When Sarsenbayev came to the opposition, the democratic forces revived and obtained the idea content.

- Most likely, the Kazakh authorities use all ways to fight opposition...

- Yes, the whole arsenal of illegal pressure is being used. Many of these methods are quite familiar for the post-soviet countries. Opposition has no place to hold a party conference: nobody rents their venues. If we rent a restaurant, the next day its owner is approached and pressurized by officials. In the regions, where the meetings of the Movement "For Just Kazakhstan" were taking place, barefaced provocations were orchestrated, including bandit attacks on the people. Can you imagine that bandits throw stones on the opposition leaders in the country, which calls itself a democratic one and even wants to take OSCE chairmanship! In broad daylight, in full view of the police! It took place repeatedly. Not long before the presidential elections, ex-mayor of Almaty Zamanbek Nurkadilov, who one and a half years ago turned to the opposition, was shot dead. One month later, the official investigation declared that he had committed suicide. Is it conceivable for a sane person, that a man can kill himself with three bullets – two in heart and one in head?

- After murders of Nurkadilov and Sarsenbayev, do you fear for your life?

- For the last four years I have suffered a lot and survived. Now I understand that they can kill me in cold blood, just like they killed Altynbek. But I do not panic. I purposefully do what I have been doing before my imprisonment — promotion of ideas of democracy and liberty in Kazakhstan. I will not leave the country. I will continue political activity.

- Do you want a revolution in Kazakhstan, like in Georgia or Ukraine?

- In my opinion, a revolution presumes forcible change of social and political order, like it was in France in 1789 or in Russia in 1917. There were no revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine. What happened there was just change of power through parliamentary or presidential elections, which were initially falsified by the former regimes. Meanwhile, regular change of government is one of the fundamental principles of democracy. I do not want to stage a revolution in Kazakhstan. I just want my Motherland to have genuine democracy and my people to choose government in free and fair elections.

Source: Versiya Newspaper

The Power Is Responsible Only If It Is Replaceable

February 4, 2006

- Galymzhan, your younger son Yelezhan is 12. How was he living when you were in prison?

- Once I got back to Almaty from the colony, on the next day I went with my wife to the school where my son studies. When I heard praises from the teachers, I understood that Yelezhan complied with my request – to study well. A boy could shrug off school in such conditions... But he was strong enough to overcome it! I was surprised how he is interested in politics and asks difficult questions. When I was sentenced, he asked his mother: "Why did they sentence daddy? He is not a criminal!" Karlygash did not know what to say ...

- What was the attitude towards you in the colony?

- There were different people: unfairly convicted and real criminals. But all of them realized that I had been sentenced for my political views, and the attitude was corresponding. In fact, the colony wardens also realized that, although they were telling that I am an ordinary prisoner. In reality, I was not an ordinary one for them – I always felt tension, because the administration and special services ordered them to be harsher with me. If other convicts could enjoy extra parcel or meeting, I could not. My second meeting with Karlygash was scheduled for January 2, 2003. I asked to move it for December 31 so that we could celebrate New Year together. Any other convict would have been granted such permission, but not me. Most likely, those "on top" wanted to see me suffering from weakness. The colony administration tried to isolate me from other convicts. Those who communicated with me were severely punished.

- They were afraid of your influence on the others?

- I think the ultimate goal was to leave me without support and encircle me with hostile environment. They tried to create unbearable conditions in order to suppress my will so that I gave up my views due to despair and misery.

- Now, when it's all over, do you feel offended?

- I do not feel hurt by the colony wardens. They were exercising the orders from above; otherwise, they could lose their jobs and lose means to sustain their families...

- Will you press for full legal rehabilitation?

- I will. But rehabilitation is an act, determined not only by me disagreement with the court decision. It is conditioned by the possibility for a free society to review its past and to go towards the triumph of justice. In other words, the decision on my rehabilitation should be made by the parliament, elected in a popular vote... The current legislature does not leave any hope for that. The Kazakh citizens have no right to appeal to the European Court for Human Rights or other international courts, because Kazakhstan is not a member of the human rights organizations.

- But it seeks chairmanship in the OSCE...

- Most likely, when Kazakhstan declared it, this desire was conditioned by entering the Council of Europe. It would mean that any citizen would be able to appeal against the Kazakh court decision in Strasbourg.

- So, you may benefit from the Kazakh chairmanship in OSCE?

- I hail this desire of Kazakhstan not because it may be advantageous for me personally, but because the way to chairmanship will inevitably advance the country towards political modernization and democratization. There are international standards that the country should observe if it wants to chair the OSCE, and the power must undertake concrete steps.

- Which are those?

- First of all it is necessary to bring our Constitution to conformity with the requirements of the Council of Europe. It should be evaluated by the Venice Commission. It is obvious that realization of the political reforms, declared by the president, should result in concrete legal constitutional norms. The second thing is full-fledged freedom of speech. We need really free media. Thirdly, we need efficient mechanisms of protection of human rights. This is a minimal set of requirements for the OSCE chairmanship. They are to be realized right now, because the issue of Kazakhstan's chairmanship will be considered in 2006.

- Is it possible to keep up?

- We must demand keeping promises from the authorities. There are many talks of semi-presidential-semi-parliamentary republic. Such debates occur only on the post-Soviet space and they have nothing to do with reality. You will never hear it in the Western democracies. There is a notion of a democracy, which presumes solving of all important issues publicly, in the parliament, and there is a notion of an autocracy. All other speculations are irrelevant. When our pro-regime figures say that the United States has a "strong presidential power", they lie. All important issues, even costs of the presidential administration maintenance, are solved there through the Congress. The same applies to France and Great Britain. In fact, the OSCE chairmanship is conditioned by one key problem – will Kazakhstan remain an autocratic state or it will drift towards democratic system? Unfortunately, currently we are very close to a classic authoritarian state. But I think that already in this year we will witness serious transformations. First of all they will come in the public awareness about democratic civil values.

- Why do you think so? Are we closer to democracy today, than in 2001, when you and other government officials came out with the demand of democratic reforms?

- You know, we – the "Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan" Movement – tried to bring regime to reason. We tried to open its eyes to the situation in the country. Now, four years later, everyone

realizes that it is impossible to start reforms from above, without participation of population. That's why today I see the main objective for me (as a democratically oriented politician) in facilitating the formation and development of civil society. Only the society itself, through various democratic institutions can push the regime for political reforms. That is why the regime always tried – especially in the past 4 years – to suppress political and civil activity of the people. It has led to the results of the recent presidential elections, which highlighted not only falsifications and injustice, but also that the people are not free. It is evident that we have very weak civil society, it is close to zero. It is impossible to form it in a moment, for instance, before the decision of our chairmanship in the OSCE is to be made. But it is also impossible to reach any ambitious goal – political or economic – without awakening of the civil consciousness and formation of civil society institutions. It is very important that the ideas we advocated in late 2001 – the ideas of democracy and free society – have entered the lexicon of all political forces of our country today.

- After November 2001 these ideas were not realized. Will they come true now?

- Yes, until now the regime was delaying the start of real democratic reforms under many pretexts, saying that the society is not ready yet. Indeed, there are no guarantees that the regime will dare to launch political transformations. But we should not forget that one of the key slogans of the Nazarbayev's campaign was the promise of political modernization. Now it has taken shape of constitutional obligations of the president. So we can and must press for active actions on democratization of the country.

When four years ago I met with the president, I had a feeling that he is ready to accept the ideas of DCK. Later, he decided to solve the problem in another way – by a crackdown. Now it is absolutely obvious that the force methods cannot solve the problem. Moreover, the necessity of serious political reforms has come to understanding of many people inside and outside the regime; the opposition's ideas capture them. The pressure tactics is obviously hopeless. I would say that the regime did not win the elections, but "suffered a victory".

- However, the authorities have triumphal mood. Some of them even say that the strong presidential power does not presume strong opposition...

- What is a "strong presidential power"? Authoritarianism? If so, then what's the use of all their talks about political reforms? Authoritarianism is not disposed towards self-reforming. The regime actively exploits the ideology of a "strong presidential power" as a guarantee of stability. This is a myth! Stability is possible only in a democratic system, based on efficient checks-and-balances system. One of the founding fathers of American democracy Madison said: "People are not angels. If they were angels, there would not be need in government". That's why the U.S. Constitution presumes the possibility of impeachment of president in case of corruption, theft or other crimes. Besides, the true stability requires democratic mechanism of change of power. The true stability cannot depend on one man's will. When the population was indoctrinated during the presidential campaign that "voting for president is voting for stability", it was one of the instruments of suppression of civil awareness. They told us: "Give your destiny to one man and do not think of politics". It is a very dangerous slogan. The duty of all responsible politicians is to permanently unmask such slogans!

- But is a common citizen ready to accept your words when the oil prices are growing, the money come to the country, and today people live really better than in early 1990s. Is there any place for civil awareness?

- When I said that we have no civil society, I didn't mean that our people are ignorant. Most of them know the price of statements about our "grand successes" and "Kazakh economic miracle". It's the same myth like "strong presidential power as a guarantor of stability". This myth is sustained by the media, first of all - TV. We live in real Kazakhstan and see that the commodity production is not developing, there is practically no competition in the economy, the true level of unemployment is much higher than the official. It is not only the "common people", who live from salary to salary, are dissatisfied. Businesses suffer from corruption and arbitrariness of the officials. What's the reason? The reason is undemocratic political system, lack of effective mechanisms of people's power, absence of civil control over the power. More and more people understand this.

- Well, what's next?

- The lessons of Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine and Georgia teach us that the power is responsible only when it is replaceable. Moreover, it is very important that replacement must come through democratic elections. That's why I say that the main objective of the opposition is to decisively and consistently push the regime towards real political modernization, force it to move from democratic rhetoric to democratic practice. But first we must analyze the post-electoral situation and elaborate a fundamental idea, which would be able to win the popular support and trust.

- The opposition proposed such an idea before the elections. It was a draft New Constitution. Why, in your opinion, it was not so successful?

- If you mean that not all people in the country could read it and evaluate it, then, yes, the opposition indeed did not have enough opportunities for a normal agitation campaign. There were numerous obstacles: the whole circulations of the draft New Constitution brochure were seized, the opposition newspapers were seized and burned, campaigners and activists have been intimidated. The most powerful information instrument – television – was fully monopolized by the authorities and inaccessible for the opposition. In this situation, the people were deprived of the opportunity to receive objective and trustworthy information. They were deprived of the opportunity to realize that there is a direct link between the real improvement of their lives and adoption of the New Constitution. Besides, the New Constitution is not an idea. It is a tool to realize the idea of political modernization of the society. The idea is now actively employed by the regime – it means that it was really successful! Now let's see what will happen to the program of political reforms, declared by the regime.

- Tell the truth – do you take offence at the president?

- With all my controversial feelings towards Mr. Nazarbayev, I cannot speak of any offence. The feeling of offence presumes a kind of interpersonal conflict, which is irrelevant in this case. It is the issue of different views – mine and Nazarbayev's – different opinions on the ways of further development of our country and our society. In other words, I mean the conflict is ideological, that's why there is, certainly, no place for offences. After all, he had warned me what would be in the end and what would happen to me personally.

- Do you regret for anything?

- No, I do not.

Source: Vremya Newspaper

Triumphal Welcome For Freed Kazak Politician

January 23, 2006

There is a vacant job as leader of the opposition, and Galymzhan Zhakiyanov could be the man to fill it now he is out of prison.

The release from prison of a leading Kazak political leader, Galymzhan Zhakiyanov, has given the opposition a much-needed boost a month after Nursultan Nazarbaev defeated all comers in the presidential election.

Arriving back in Almaty after his release on January 14, Zhakiyanov was met by over 1,000 well-wishers at the railway station. His triumphal arrival in the former capital which is still the centre of political activity in Kazakhstan suggested he was set to take centre stage in the opposition movement.

In the first interview he gave after his release, Zhakiyanov made it clear he planned to resume public life as a politician.

Until 2001, Zhakiyanov was part of Nazarbayev's administration, serving as governor of Pavlodar region in the north of Kazakhstan. But he fell from grace when he and a number of other high-profile political and business figures called for wide-ranging political reforms.

The same year, Zhakiyanov and former energy, industry and trade minister Mukhtar Ablyazov jointly founded what became the leading opposition force of the day, the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan, DCK.

But a year later, in 2002, both men were sent to prison for crimes they had allegedly committed while in office. Zhakiyanov got seven years and Ablyazov six, following separate court cases that international human rights organisations said were clearly driven by political motives.

In May 2003, Ablyazov won early release after petitioning President Nazarbaev. Once freed, he did not re-enter political life.

Zhakiyanov sought no such clemency and was granted none. The possibility of his release arose only in October 2005, when by law he became eligible for parole because he had served half his sentence.

Given the political sensitivities about his case, and the fact that Nazarbaev was just about to go into an election, Zhakiyanov's release was a touch-and-go affair.

On December 14, a court in Ekibastuz, the nearest town to Zhakiyanov's prison, ruled that he should be freed. But on 23 December, the day before he was scheduled for release, the prosecutor responsible for penal institutions in Pavlodar region filed an objection with the Ekibastuz court, on the grounds that Zhakiyanov had breached prison regulations.

Yevgeny Zhovtis, director of the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law, told IWPR that of nine infractions cited in the objection, eight had been annulled and were thus not legally relevant, while the ninth consisted of a claim that Zhakiyanov leaving his workplace to put on warmer clothes, which was insufficient cause to deny him his freedom.

Opposition supporters suspected that the delay was created to avoid adverse publicity ahead of Nazarbayev's inauguration on January 11, a time when international media attention would be on Kazakhstan.

Three days after the president began his new term in office; the court dismissed the prosecutor's objection and ordered Zhakiyanov's immediate release.

Supporters of the jailed politician present at the hearing say they were initially doubtful that the court would rule in his favour, but they were encouraged when the doors were opened to anyone who wished to attend. The OSCE – which had more than once asked the Kazak government to release Zhakiyanov – sent an observer from its Almaty mission.

The final ruling was greeted with rejoicing. In the courtroom, Zhakiyanov's supporters rushed to congratulate him with tears in their eyes.

Opposition members say Zhakiyanov's return to politics will give the whole anti-Nazarbaev movement a boost, at a time when repression of its activity seemed to be getting worse rather than better.

Fears that the terms of his conditional release might be worded to curb his political activity have receded, as he is bound only by general parole conditions.

In the time that Zhakiyanov has been in jail, the DCK has since been somewhat eclipsed by the newer Ak Jol party, but that has in turn been weakened by a split last year that left two parties in place of one – the original and the Real Ak Jol.

All these opposition groups have been dogged by the government's refusal to grant them registration, which means that for the purposes of elections and other political events, they do not officially exist. The DCK has tried without success to get round the problem by renaming itself Alga – "Forwards".

Standing somewhat apart from these centrist, pro-market parties is the leftist Kazak Communist Party, the only opposition group to be officially registered.

On the other side of the political divide are an array of parties that support President Nazarbaev including Otan, the biggest, and his daughter Dariga's Ashar party.

Although these opposition groups have shown a tendency for schism, they also appear to have recognised the need for a unifying figure. Their most recent attempt to identify one resulted in the nomination of Zharmakhan Tuyakbay, a former speaker of parliament, as the common opposition candidate in last month's presidential election. Tuyakbay came a distant second after Nazarbaev - but ahead of the three other candidates.

Bulat Abilov, one of the leaders of the Real Ak Jol, says Zhakiyanov's release is of historic significance for the opposition, "This is a major event for all of us. I think that Galymzhan has shown with all his recent activity that he is a great person, a great politician. That is a huge support for the opposition, for all of us.

"I think that with Galymzhan, we will be more active, more unified and we will have greater solidarity."

Leading Communist Party member Tolen Tokhtasynov agreed, saying, "I think that Galymzhan's release on probation is an event which the whole of society in Kazakhstan was waiting for. I think that the political process will now progress more intensively."

The opposition parties currently have few avenues for dialogue with the government. Although many problems persist, Zhakiyanov's release removes one of the opposition's main objections to taking part in the government-sponsored National Commission for Democratisation and Civil Society. And analysts say the authorities will no longer be able to simply ignore their opponents if these include a heavyweight like Zhakiyanov.

"A new policy will be developed for the opposition's interaction with the authorities, and more systematic work will be conducted with the public," said Guljan Ergalieva, a senior member of the Movement for a Fair Kazakhstan. "Now that Zhakiyanov has returned, the regime will no longer be able to ignore the opposition's very existence, as it did in the recent presidential election.

"Zhakiyanov's participation in a civilised dialogue between the regime and the opposition will be of immense importance. I think that it's not only the active people in society who hope this, I think the international community will also be watching this closely."

The task for Zhakiyanov, if he is offered and accepts the leading role in the opposition, will be to get a grip on the diverse political forces and ambitions that make it up.

"Zhakiyanov does not have much room for manoeuvre," said Dosym Satpaev, director of the Risk Assessment Group, a Kazakhstan think-tank.

Satpaev believes that if Zhakiyanov is to be successful, he must address key problems facing the opposition parties, including their weak organisational structures and lack of strong, ideology-led leadership, plus the authorities' continuing refusal to register them. As a result, he said, Zhakiyanov faces a situation where "there are many groups within the opposition which have divergent views on tactics and strategy. He will have to coordinate his own ambitions - if he has any - with those of other partners in the opposition."

Sabit Jusupov, the head of the Institute for Socioeconomic Information and Forecasting, believes Zhakiyanov will try to steer these forces to more central ground so that they are seen as a constructive opposition rather than as radically anti-Nazarbaev.

"There is currently no one occupying the niche of a constructive opposition, and all the signs are that Galymzhan will go for this niche," said Jusupov. "That will increase his authority immensely... [His] return will undoubtedly provide new stimulus to the opposition, but in my opinion to the constructive part of the opposition."

Source: IWPR

Freed Kazakh Opposition Leader To Stay In Politics

January 18, 2006

Kazakh opposition leader Galymzhan Zhakiyanov says he intends to stay in politics, following his release from prison.

Zhakiyanov made the comments at his first press conference since his early release on 14 January after more than three years in jail. Zhakiyanov also urged President Nursultan Nazarbaev to deliver on his promises of democratic reforms.

"My position, the position that my comrades and I put forward in the fall of 2001, has not changed," he said. "It remains the same. Now, four years later, I am still absolutely convinced that democratic reform is necessary for the normal development of our society, of our country."

Zhakiyanov co-founded the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DVK) movement in 2001. He was sentenced to seven years in prison the following year for abuse of office while governor of Pavlodar Oblast.

The DVK was banned in 2004 but Zhakiyanov joined the opposition coalition For a Just Kazakhstan while in prison. Zhakiyanov's supporters and rights groups say his imprisonment was politically motivated.

Source: RFE/RL

Zhakiyanov Arrived In Almaty

January 17, 2006

On January 15 on "Almaty-II" railroad station an impressive amount of people have waited for a train "Astana-Almaty". The reason for this was that one of the leaders of the democratic forces Galymzhan Zhakiyanov, being in prison for half of his term, finally should have been arrived in Almaty. Fortunately, the meeting of G. Zhakiyanov was held without excesses. G. Zhakiyanov didn't make any attempts to organize some kind of meeting, he only has been smiling and communicating with people. More than 2000 people that came to meet G. Zhakiyanov filled up the railroad station and shared with their impressions with each other.

Meanwhile, member of presidium of the Movement "For Just Kazakhstan" Peter Svoik, who has been a defender of Zhakiyanov at the court, told that: "The situation in Shiderty was very difficult. We were very worry since it was unclear what will be result. Probably the procedure itself, our presence and what we have said there influenced a lot on the decision. In any case, the judges have been consulting for two hours on seemingly ready decision. So, it was hard in Shiderty. And it is normal if people today are greeting G. Zhakiyanov".

In her turn, wife of Zhakiyanov – Karlygash Zhakiyanova, describing her joy, has pointed that: "If it could be possible to imagine that all that had happened is just a nightmare. Today is so exciting day. We have been waiting for it for so long. In April it will be 4 years since Galymzhan was sentenced. We rest our best hope on this year. Also I would like to thank all that have helped us and supported Galymzhan. I would like to wish that no one would experience what Galymzhan had experienced".

In 2002 former governor of Pavlodar region Galymzhan Zhakiyanov was accused for exceeding his authorities and was sentenced on seven years. Supporters of Zhakiyanov have claimed that the decision of the court was biased and Zhakiyanov was condemned due to the political motives. Meanwhile, the authorities have been continuing to insist that there was no political motivation in the accusations brought against Zhakiyanov. However that may be, one of the main demands of the democratic forces during more than three years was the release of Galymzhan Zhakiyanov. By trying to obtain their goal they have ignored all the proposals from the authorities to enter into a dialogue.

According to opinion of independent journalist, which also had served a sentence, Sergei Duvanov, those demands were of principle character. "It was necessary to advance the demands at that moment. It is reasonable that they (opposition) were doing this since one of the founders of "Democratic choice of Kazakhstan" was in prison. The issue was of principal character. And as a matter of fact they had obtained their demands: Zhakiyanov is free, and the president is a head of National Commission for Democratization Issues (NCDI). Basically it can be said that it was not an

implementation of their demands but, nevertheless, it has happened. And now the democratic forces can enter into the dialogue and all things would be logical”, - say S. Duvanov.

Meanwhile, one of the leaders of the Movement “For Just Kazakhstan” Oraz Jandosov considers that the delay of the decision on grant of a parole of G. Zhakiyanov is only an index of bad taste. “Two or three months of the delay, basically, didn’t play any significant role, even bearing in mind the December presidential elections. And it seems to me that the aim was to grate on nerves of the family and relatives”, - pointed Oraz Jandosov. “As for the demands advanced by the democratic forces, then it can be said that the opposition that supports the Movement “For Just Kazakhstan” has always been a constructive one. But we have advanced a number of demands, among which the release of G. Zhakiyanov was a key issue. Now Galymzhan is free, and it is clear now that the main obstacle, because of which the opposition did not participate in a dialogue in the last year, is passed. Now, most probably, the opposition will participate in the initiatives, which are proposed by the authorities, or will propose its own. But we have always paid our attention and will be doing so on it if it is a real action or it serves as a screen for Kazakh people. It is a key issue. And I am not excluding the fact that once having begun to participate, it is possible that we will stop participating in the dialogue in case if it won’t bring any practical advance towards those tasks, which country is facing”.

Source: Mizinov.Net

Zhakiyanov Is Free

January 16, 2006

A circuit Collegium for Criminal Cases of the Pavlodar regional court that took place in Shiderty colony settlement has proved validity of the decision of the Ekibastuz city court on conditional release of Zhakiyanov. Right after his release Zhakiyanov headed for Almaty. G. Zhakiyanov was accused on abuse-of-office charges when he was a governor of the Pavlodar region. The oppositionist was convicted in August 2002 and sentenced to seven years of imprisonment.

Nearly one month ago, the Ekibastuz city court made a positive decision on early conditional release of G. Zhakiyanov. Subsequently, this decision was privately by prosecutor, and it seemed that release of the prominent opposition prisoner is dragging out for an uncertain term. But the December 14 decision of the Pavlodar regional court’s collegium is not subject to appeal. At least head of the department of Committee of penitentiary system for the Pavlodar region Kumar Tuktybayev claimed it to be so.

The only thing that Galymzhan Zhakiyanov must do is to register in the supervising bodies on place of residence every week. On January 15, G. Zhakiyanov arrived to Almaty. The “Almaty 2” railroad station was crowded by no less than two thousand people. At the moment of the train arrival, many of them chanted: “Galymzhan, Galymzhan! Hurrah!”

The station and the adjacent territory were filled with police officers. According to the activists of the democratic Movement “For Just Kazakhstan”, G. Zhakiyanov has refrained from making a press-conference and interview so that the authorities did not consider it as an attempt of an unauthorized rally.

Member of Presidium of the Movement “For Just Kazakhstan” Peter Svoik, who has been a civil advocate at the trial, noted that probably the decision of the court was ready in advance, but they were forced to wait for about two hours, while the judges have been consulting and preparing to announce the final decision.

“For the first time I didn’t know what would be the outcome of this hearing. I always know, unfortunately, that the outcome is not as it has to be. This was the first hearing that made us worry very much, and till the very end we were uncertain about the decision. But, thank God, it all turned out as we wanted to!”, he said.

It is unclear yet what G. Zhakiyanov will be doing upon his return to Almaty – will he work in the Movement “For Just Kazakhstan” or create a new democratic party. A press-conference with his participation is expected in nearest future.

Source: Deutsche Welle