

OSCE representative concerned over threat to media pluralism in Kazakhstan

VIENNA 30 November 2012



Dunja Mijatović, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, addresses the OSCE Permanent Council at the Hofburg in Vienna, 29 November 2012. (OSCE/Curtis Budden)

VIENNA, 29 November 2012 – The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatović, expressed concern today that legal proceedings initiated against several media outlets in Kazakhstan might severely undermine media pluralism in the country.

"I recall that during my recent official visit to Astana the authorities assured me of their commitment to further improve media freedom. Recent developments, which may result in the closure of up to 30 media outlets, would send just the opposite message," Mijatović said.

The office of the Almaty Chief Prosecutor on 20 November sent a petition to courts demanding that they close dozens of newspapers, television stations and websites on extremism charges. Among these media outlets are newspapers *Vzglyad*, *Respublika* and *Golos Respubliki*; K+ television station; and online news sites *respublika-kz.info* and *stan.tv*.

"In the letters I sent to Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov and Presidential Adviser Yermukhamet Yertisbayev on this matter, I stated that the courts should investigate the prosecutors' demand with due consideration for media freedom and media pluralism. It is of utmost importance that print and online information resources remain accessible to the public in Kazakhstan," said Mijatović.

"The government and the judiciaries should not fight threats to our societies on allegations alone, thereby jeopardizing media pluralism, which is a vital OSCE commitment. I remain hopeful that the Kazakh authorities will find a solution that will honor their OSCE media freedom commitments."

Mijatović said she would continue to follow media developments in the country closely.

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