



PRESS RELEASE

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Justice for Rasim

Kazakhstani organizations and those abroad call on the authorities of Kazakhstan to bring those responsible for torturing Rasim Bayramov to justice. Sentenced to prison for theft in 2008 after being forced to make a confession, Rasim spent over three years in prison before being released early on health grounds. On 14 February of this year, after almost eight years of fighting to prove his innocence, Rasim Bayramov tragically died of complications resulting from an illness he contracted in prison. He was 33 years old.

Human rights defenders managed to get the criminal case regarding the use of torture reopened, but have faced constant opposition from the law enforcement agencies, they told reporters at the press conference.

On 17 July 2008 police accused Rasim of stealing a small sum of money and three bottles of beer from a local shop. In order to force him to confess, police officers tortured him: kicking and beating him all over his body, they dragged him along the corridor by his hair and threatened him with sexual abuse. They deprived him of sleep at night and gave him nothing to eat or drink for over two days. The 26-year-old man eventually signed a confession and later was sentenced to five years in prison.

Rasim Bayramov and his mother lodged several complaints about the torture and procedural violations with the police and procurator's offices, but no effective investigation into the allegations was initiated.

In May 2011 Rasim Bayramov wrote to the UN Committee against Torture, which found in 2014 that his treatment at the hands of the police amounted to torture, that the Kazakhstani authorities should pay him compensation for his suffering and bring those responsible to justice. The Kazakhstan justice system interpreted the UN ruling as a joke – ruling that Rasim Bayramov be awarded a miserly sum in compensation for the moral damages he had suffered:

“We turned to the UN Committee against Torture in search of justice and we proved that the torture had taken place, and that the trial had been unfair. I remember how this decision boosted Rasim’s spirits – for the first time in six years he had been listened to and understood. He smiled. I remember Rasim said that he felt relief, began to sleep better and that his “soul was calmer somehow”. But all that Rasim received after the UN decision was a payment of 100,000 tenge (approximately 260 euros). It was a mockery...” says Anastasia Miller, Director of the Kostanay branch of the Kazakhstan International Office for Human Rights and Rule of Law.

In February 2016, after Bayramov's death and following a complaint by his lawyer Snezhana Kim, the Kostanay Regional Prosecutor's Office reopened the case on torture and referred it for investigation to the Special Prosecutors' Unit at the Prosecutor General's Office, but in March the Special Prosecutors Unit again ruled to close the case for “lack of evidence of a crime”.

Only by appealing to the courts did Rasim Bayramov's lawyers manage get the case reopened – on 6 May 2016 Court No. 2 of Kostanay upheld the complaint and ruled that the decision to close the case was illegal. The Regional Prosecutor's office appealed against the decision but the appeal was refused on 18 May by the Regional court.

When we applied to the United Nations the case documents were all verified – we were not asked for any additional photos or information about his psychological health – the case was clear to them and they issued their decision. In Kazakhstan we had had to fight for years! After his release Rasim was taken many times for psychological examinations to determine his mental state. He was he watched after the UN decision was issued, and pressurized as they tried to blacken his name. His body simply could not withstand all this. But how many more years will I have to fight for justice for my son?” says Nataliya Bayramova, Rasim’s mother.

From the beginning of 2016, some 78 people have turned to the Coalition against Torture of Kazakhstan with complaints of torture or other ill-treatment. In 2015, there were 162 cases.

For further information on the case of Rasim Bayramov, refer to: <http://iphronline.org/kazakhstan-justice-mustprevail-for-torture-victim-20150128.html>

See also the UN Committee against Torture decision:

www.bureau.kz/dogovornye_organy_oon/soobsheniya_v_komitet_oon_protiv_pytok/rasim_bairamo_v_protiv_rk

Press conference participants

- 1) Anastasia Miller, Director of Kostanay branch of KIBHR (+77773635529)
- 2) Snezhana Kim, lawyer (+77012507867)
- 3) Nataliya Bayramova, mother of Rasim Bayramov
- 4) Makhabbat Kadralinova, lawyer of Kostanay branch of KIBHR (+ 77772393517)