

**Question for written answer E-004824/2014
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)**

Rule 117

Ana Gomes (S&D)

Subject: VP/HR - Cases of Bakhytzhan Kashkumbayev and Aron Atabek in Kazakhstan

67-year-old pastor Bakhytzhan Kashkumbayev, who has health problems, was remanded in custody for nine months. The church minister faced charges of extremism, inciting religious hatred and leadership of an illegal religious association. He received a suspended sentence of four years' imprisonment on charges of intentionally causing grievous bodily harm. The pastor was forcibly placed in a psychiatric hospital, while his right to a defence and ability to obtain timely medical care were restricted. Human rights organisations recognised Bakhytzhan Kashkumbayev as a political prisoner and are issuing calls to cease the restriction of freedom of conscience and religion in Kazakhstan.

Aron Atabek, well-known Kazakhstan dissident and poet, as well as political prisoner, has been behind bars for over six years now. For a number of years, he has been kept in a solitary confinement cell in one of the most rigid regime prisons of the country; despite his imprisonment, he has continued to criticise the regime of Nursultan Nazarbayev in his works, due to which he was subjected to various forms of pressure and harsh treatment from the administration. According to the court sentence, the 61-year-old dissident will only be allowed to walk free in 2024.

1. Has the EU established regular contacts with the above-mentioned persons and their families? Have any representatives from the EU delegation visited Aron Atabek in prison?
2. Has the HR/VP pressed the Kazakh authorities for the inclusion of Aron Atabek on the list of persons to be subjected to amnesty during the revision and passing of a subsequent amnesty legislation bill, and called upon the President of Kazakhstan to consider the possibility of pardoning Aron Atabek, at least on humanitarian grounds?
3. Has the HR/VP shown concern regarding the violation of Kashkumbayev's right to a fair trial and the conditions of his detention, and requested the reconsideration of the case in the appellate instances and the conduct of an independent investigation?