

Kazakhstan: land of freedom, pluralism...and hypocrisy

While Kazakhstan is building Potemkin villages, by trying to open itself to the international community, attempting to lead a non-nuclear international movement, signing the UN Convention against torture or applying for a membership at the Security Council; the truth inside the country is that of the good old times.

The leading party, Nur Otan, has ruled for over 20 years, which according to them reflects the political stability in the country. The reality, however, shows political leaders in prison (Vladimir Kozlov, Alga Party), torture as a routine practice (Roza Tulataeva, Bazarbay Kenzhebaev who was tortured to death, etc.) and media repression (Respublika Newspaper, Uralskaya Nedela, uncountable many websites...).

Concerning the latter human rights violation, things have lately become tough. No doubt: Mr. Nazarbaev, aged 73, is soon going to pass away according to the rumors. Therefore, the echoes of instability and democracy resound through the corridors of the presidential palace, and they need to be shut down whatever the price.

“On 19 April 2012, Lukpan Akhmedyarov, a journalist for the *Uralskaya Nedelya* newspaper, was assaulted near his home in Uralsk (Western Kazakhstan). He was reportedly attacked by unidentified assailants who stabbed him eight times and shot at him with a traumatic pistol”, the OSCE admitted in its reports. In addition, he was then condemned to pay 26,000 euros for insulting a policeman.

However, the brutal nature of the regime had already showed on December 16th 2011. Several months after a great number of oil-workers had gone on strike to protest against the corruption that impoverished their salaries, disturbances were provoked by the administration in the city Zhanaozen to allow the invasion of the army. Tens of civilians were murdered, including some whose only fault was to attend a concert celebrated on the Independence Day.

But when you owe a country, instead of ruling it, you do not need to give any explanations. As they like to convince themselves here, “every country has its own problems, torture and repression happen everywhere”.

The massacre of Zhanaozen brought to the European Parliament

On the 16th of December 2013, the European Parliament will be holding a public hearing, followed by a press conference, to bring the reality of Kazakhstan and the massacre that occurred exactly 2 years ago, to the European representatives. In addition to the organizer Paul Murphey, a member of the Socialist Party, 2 oil workers from Aktau and a former employee from the OSCE Center in Astana will participate.

The event will try to throw some light on the reality of the massacre, refuting all the lies presented within the official version of the government. For the very first time, the members of

the Parliament and the European public opinion will receive a firsthand account of the tragedy that terminated the 7 month strike of Uzen Munay Gaz' workers, and the torture practices which witness underwent during the trial.

The aim of this hearing is to warn about the brutality of the Kazakh regime led by Nazarbaev, given the fact that Europe is one of the main oil importers from Kazakhstan. The systematic methods of torture, media repression, and human rights' violations will also be exposed in order to discourage international trade with the government of Kazakhstan and preserve the moral values for which EU was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012.

A former OSCE employee travels to Zhanaozen to find out the true

From the 12th to the 17th of October, Pedro Luis Rubio, employed by the OSCE Center in Astana, visited the city of Zhanaozen in order to make further research on the massacre and the reasons that led to it. His investigation included interviews with relatives of the victims, injured civilians, and a visit to the morgue, the cemetery and the buildings that were burned down that day.

The aim of the visit was to provide the international public opinion, with a clearer understanding of the massacre that the regime had orchestrated pursuing the end of the oil workers' strike. He admitted to be terribly powerless when listening to families of the victims, relating how their sons' only fault was to attend the concerts ran by the town council, where they would then be murdered.

All the families agreed that the tragedy was long planned by the government. To support their argument, militias had been brought from other regions some days in advance, some unidentified men in black clothes set fire to the akimat and the offices of Uzen Munay Gaz, and snipers were presumably shooting from the hotel once standing between the 2 buildings. Moreover, locals were offered high sums of money for setting up their *yurtas* on the main square, in an attempt to disperse the protesters.

The documents and testimonies gathered will bring unknown truth to decision-makers at the European Parliament, where the information will be released. It will also help to reinforce the importance of the OSCE mission in Astana and its commitment towards democratic values.