

EXTERNAL

AI Index: EUR 57/14/96

UA 214/96 Fear of torture / Possible prisoner of conscience 3 September 1996

KAZAKSTANNina SIDOROVA (f), aged 42

Amnesty International is concerned about allegations that Nina Sidorova has been tortured and ill-treated in the custody of the State Investigative Committee (GSK) of Kazakstan, and fears that this alleged treatment is continuing. Amnesty International is also concerned that Nina Sidorova's detention on criminal charges may be spurious, and may represent an attempt to punish her for political activism.

Nina Sidorova was detained on the evening of 20 August 1996 by people described as officers of the GSK, who allegedly forced their way into her home in Almaty, the capital of Kazakstan, without presenting a warrant. Since then she is reported to have been held at various locations in Almaty, and is currently detained at the headquarters of the GSK. Throughout her detention, in communications with her lawyer and in letters which have reportedly been smuggled out to her family, Nina Sidorova has alleged torture in the form of beatings by GSK officers, and ill-treatment including confinement in small, unventilated or pitch dark punishment cells. The effects of such ill-treatment are said to be compounded by Nina Sidorova's acute claustrophobia.

Nina Sidorova has not yet been formally charged, but is reportedly being held for questioning in connection with criminal charges of defamation of a judge, hooliganism and assault on officials of the Almaty city procurator's office.

Amnesty International has no information about the specific basis for the hooliganism charge, but the charges of defamation and assault allegedly relate to incidents which occurred in late 1995. The fact that almost 10 months elapsed between the commission of these alleged offences and the arrest of Nina Sidorova, who had been living openly in Almaty for at least part of that time, appears to lend weight to claims by Nina Sidorova's supporters that her arrest is politically motivated. Her supporters claim that Nina Sidorova's arrest is linked to the fact that on the day of her arrest she had reportedly sought unsuccessfully to meet the Deputy Minister of Justice of Kazakstan to discuss the legal registration of the Cossack Community of Kazakstan, an organization promoting the interests of Kazakstan's Cossack minority.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has recently documented allegations of ill-treatment in pre-trial detention and in the penitentiary system in Kazakstan. Cases publicized by the organization have included that of Nikolai Gunkin, a Cossack activist, who served a three-month prison term ending in January 1996 following conviction of charges which appeared to be politically motivated.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Russian, English or your own language:

- urging authorities in Kazakstan to guarantee the physical safety and well-being of Nina Sidorova;
- urging an investigation into Nina Sidorova's allegations of torture and ill-treatment, with the findings made public and anyone found responsible for torture or ill-treatment brought to justice;
- calling for clarification of the basis for the criminal charges against Nina Sidorova;
- urging that, if Nina Sidorova's detention is motivated solely to punish her for non-violent political activities, notably the exercise of her fundamental

human right to freedom of association, she be released immediately and unconditionally

APPEALS TO:

The President of Kazakstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev

Respublika Kazakhstan

480091 g. Almaty

Pl. Respubliki, 4

Prezidentu Respubliki Kazakhstan NAZARBAYEVU N.A.

Telegrams: Kazakstan, Almaty, apparat prezidenta, Prezidentu Nazarbayevu

Faxes: (7 3272) 63 95 95

Salutation: Dear President

2. The Procurator General of Kazakstan

Respublika Kazakhstan

480099 g. Almaty

ul. Zheltoksan, 189

Prokuratura

Generalnomu prokuroru

Telegrams: Kazakstan, Almaty, Gen.prokuroru

Faxes: (7 3272) 53 27 30

Salutation: Dear Procurator General

3. The Chairman of the State Investigative Committee, Zhamarkan Tuyakbayev

Respublika Kazakstan

g. Almaty

Gosudarstvenny sledstvenny komitet

Predsedatelyu Tuyakbayevu Zh.A

Telegrams: Kazakstan, Almaty, GSK, Predsedatelyu Tuyakbayevu

Salutation: Dear Chairman

COPIES TO:

Minister of Internal Affairs of Kazakstan, Kairbek Suleymenov

Respublika Kazakhstan

480091 g. Almaty

ul. Kabanbai batyra, 95

MVD

Ministru SULEYMENOVU K.

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakstan, Kasymzhomart Tokayev

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g. Almaty

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and to diplomatic representatives of Kazakstan accredited to your country.

[N.B. The spelling KAZAKSTAN is as officially approved for latin script by the country's government. The addresses above are in transliteration from Russian cyrillic script, so the spelling KAZAKHSTAN has been retained there for consistency.]

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 15 October 1996.