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Christian

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September 24, 2012

The Honorable Suzan Johnson-Cook  
Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Room 2428  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Ambassador Johnson-Cook,

Recently our Vice President of Government Relations, Aaron Mercer, contacted two of your staff members, Daniel Nadel, Acting Deputy Director of the Office of International Religious Freedom, and Elizabeth Huse Neil, EUR Team Leader (IRF) and Foreign Service Officer, regarding the imprisonment of Pastor Makset Djabbarbergenov of Uzbekistan.

Many of our members have followed with great concern the situation of Pastor Djabbarbergenov, who was arrested for illegal religious teaching in his home and for literature distribution. This matter is of particular concern to one of our member organizations, Evangelism Explosion International (EE), as Pastor Djabbarbergenov is one of their staff members. I have enclosed a copy of the letter we received from Dr. John Sorensen, President of EE International.

NRB respectfully asks that you work to aid Pastor Djabbarbergenov in the midst of this terrible circumstance. We are also grateful for your continued help in promoting the free exercise of religion for members of all faiths globally.

Thank you for time and your leadership of the U.S. Department of State.

Sincerely,

Frank Wright, Ph.D.  
President & CEO

Enclosure



September 19, 2012

Mr. Frank Wright  
President, National Religious Broadcasters Association  
9510 Technology Drive  
Manassas VA 20110

Dear Frank,

It is with a heavy heart that I write this letter to appeal to you to come to the aid of Makset Djabbarbergenov, a fellow believer, facing extradition to his home country of Uzbekistan to face prosecution for his religious beliefs. Masket, married and the father of 4 (soon to be 5) children, is on staff with Evangelism Explosion International, known as Heart to Heart Ministries in this area. He is accused of hosting a small house church consisting mainly of family members.

In a September 10<sup>th</sup> article published by F18 News, they reported: *Makset Djabbarbergenov – a Protestant pastor wanted in his home country of Uzbekistan for "illegal" religious teaching and literature distribution – has been arrested by the authorities of Kazakhstan, where he sought refuge in 2007. He was detained after police held his sister-in-law for two weeks to find his whereabouts, family members told Forum 18 News Service. A court ordered on 7 September Djabbarbergenov be held in detention until Kazakhstan's General Prosecutor's Office decides whether to send him back. "As a person I can say this is not right," Daniyar Zharykbasov of Almaty's Bostandyk District Prosecutor's Office told Forum 18. "But we have to follow the rules."*

*Askhat Primbetov, head of the Extradition Division of the International Co-operation Department at the General Prosecutor's Office, declined to comment on Djabbarbergenov's case. "When the documents arrive we will examine them and take a position," he told Forum 18 from the capital Astana on 10 September. "Until then we can't give any comment." Asked about the United Nations Committee Against Torture's 1 June finding in a similar case that Kazakhstan had violated human rights obligations by extraditing to Uzbekistan a group of Muslim refugees and asylum seekers in 2011, Primbetov insisted that his government is preparing an official response to the Committee. "The Committee decision reached us officially only in August, and we have*



*up to 90 days to respond. We are committed to responding."*

*Zharykbasov of Bostandyk District Prosecutor's Office told Forum 18 that the Uzbek authorities said Djabbarbergenov was wanted under Article 229-2 of the Uzbek Criminal Code, which punishes "violation of the procedure for teaching religion" and carries a maximum term of three years' imprisonment. He is also wanted under Article 244-3, which punishes "illegal production, storage, import or distribution of religious literature" and also carries a maximum term of three years' imprisonment. Zharykbasov initially told Forum 18 the extradition case was not about religious activity. But told that the Uzbek authorities are seeking to imprison Djabbarbergenov because he led an unregistered Protestant church in his hometown of Nukus in Karakalpakstan.*

As a ministry the entire staff of EE, along with fellow Christians from around the world, are joining together to pray for the safe release of Masket. However, due to the previous documented cases of torture and imprisonment based on religious activity in Uzbekistan, I feel it necessary to ask you to intervene on his behalf.

Thank you for prayerfully considering this request. Also, if deemed appropriate, would you consider forwarding this email to anyone else you believe might be able to assist Masket? Please let me know if there is anything I might do to help in this effort.

Yours in His Service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John B. Sorensen', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr. John B. Sorensen