



Liz Truss
Secretary of State for Foreign Commonwealth and Development Affairs
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

3rd February 2022

Dear Secretary of State

Targeted anti-corruption sanctions in relation to Kazakhstan

We are writing to urge you to impose urgent targeted sanctions under the UK's Global Anti-Corruption Sanctions Regime in relation to Kazakhstan. It is now three weeks since the unprecedented violence in Kazakhstan in which the government was forced to resign amidst widespread reports of Kazakh elites who had plundered their country seeking refuge in countries abroad. The corruption by this elite is one of the most egregious examples of kleptocracy in recent years that has gone hand in hand with violations of human rights, depriving people of fundamental freedoms, and eventually resulted in large-scale protests due to the lack of other ways for the people to express their opinions.

This moment is a critical time to encourage change. If corrupt elites know that their assets will be frozen and their ability to travel freely will be curtailed it would send a powerful message.

We have seen with Russia and with Belarus that where there is political will, the UK is prepared to move swiftly with allies to take action and use sanctions to support its call for behaviour change. Swift action is essential to avoid the dissipation of corrupt assets out of our financial centre. The imposition of sanctions would enable the urgent freezing of assets in the UK that result from the corruption of the

Nazarbayev-era, and preserve them for further investigation by UK law enforcement, and ultimately for the potential return of these assets to the people of Kazakhstan from whom they have been stolen.

The UK has a heavy responsibility in the case of Kazakhstan as it has long provided a safe haven for corrupt assets of the departing elite. Swift action by the UK in implementing anti-corruption sanctions will help embolden the new government in Kazakhstan to take steps to retrieve assets looted from the people of Kazakhstan.

We urge you to work with colleagues to ensure that the UK law enforcement bodies proceed at pace with investigations into corrupt assets in the UK by Nazarbayev-era individuals, and that they are properly resourced to do so. Progress on law enforcement investigations into Kazakh linked corruption combined with action on sanctions would send a powerful message that the UK will use all the tools at its disposal to tackle corruption.

At the same time, the UK government should urge the Tokayev government to allow independent investigation of human rights abuses, including the treatment of detainees, suppression of peaceful protest and use of excessive force by security forces, alleged to have taken place during the weeks of unrest in early January. If it transpires that the new regime is unwilling to allow such independent investigation and continues to engage in suppression of human rights, the UK should consider with its international partners how the imposition of targeted human rights sanctions could ensure the new regime abides by international law and meets its obligations to protect the human rights of its citizens.

Earlier this year as a host to the G7, the UK committed to strengthen cooperation on denying safe haven to corrupt actors and their wealth. It is time for the UK to show that it is prepared to live up to its international commitments and use sanctions on targeted Kazakh designations to tackle the scourge of kleptocracy.

Yours

Adam Hug, Director, Foreign Policy Centre (in a personal capacity)

Leila Seiiitbek, Freedom for Eurasia NGO

John Heathershaw, Professor of International Relations, University of Exeter

Thomas Mayne, Research fellow, University of Exeter

James Nixey, Director of Russia, Eurasia and Europe Programs, Chatham House

Eva van der Merwe, Executive Director, International Lawyers Project

Susan Hawley, Executive Director, Spotlight on Corruption

Anneke Van Woudenberg, Executive Director, Rights & Accountability in Development (RAID)

Duncan Hames, Director of Policy, Transparency International UK

Oliver Windridge, rights: applied

Rupert Skilbeck, Director, REDRESS