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Kazakhstan**



**British Embassy
Astana**

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**Department for
International
Development**



**Penal Reform
International in
Central Asia**

PRESS-RELEASE

TRAINING FOR JOURNALISTS IN ASTANA

Astana, 12-13 March, 2013

On 12-13 March 2013, Penal Reform International (PRI), with the support of the British Embassy to Kazakhstan and the Norwegian Embassy to Kazakhstan, will host training for journalists on the theme «Qualified media work in the field of penal reform and prisoners' rights».

The training will be led by a team of experts from the United Kingdom and Kazakhstan. The goal of the event is to train the journalists on criminal justice reform, the current situation in Kazakhstan's prisons, strategies for good journalism and successful techniques for bringing issues in penal reform and the human rights of prisoners to public attention.

“Kazakhstan should be congratulated for reducing its prison population from 85,000 to 48,000 in the last decade, but the numbers by international standards are still too high. Prison is not only very expensive, it is also very ineffective in re-socialising offenders. Public surveys show even victims of crime recognise that prison does not reform offenders; it just makes them more likely to re-offend. Kazakhstan has taken a welcome step by expanding alternatives to prison – with the new probation service for offenders on conditional sentences – which will be much more effective. The new service helps offenders improve their education, learn new skills, and look for work while remaining at home. As a British minister once said, ‘prison is an expensive way of making bad people, worse’”, says James Malcolm Dean, expert and former social policy editor of The Guardian newspaper (United Kingdom).

According to Saule Mektepbaeva, Regional Director of PRI in Central Asia, “Explaining issues of criminal law is always difficult. A journalist has to work to find a balance between their own ideas about morality, the interests of the victim and the position of offender, and between individual cases and criminal policy in general. Every word by a journalist counts. It is no secret that changes in penal policy in many countries have been the result of cases covered in the mass media. PRI has decided to give 25 journalists interested in this topic detailed information on the main areas of current criminal justice and penal reform. Our task is to help journalists to look at current issues, and in particular at what is appropriate, and what works and what doesn't, considerations which rarely get the attention they deserve”.

The two-day training course will be held on 12-13 of March 2013 in the conference hall of KING HOTEL (conference hall), 7 Valikhanov street, Astana.

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