

# Tony Blair offered advice to Kazakhstan dictator

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Former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, through his private consultancy, gave Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev advice in 2012 on how to handle criticism following a massacre of protesting workers.

On December 16, 2011 police violently attacked striking oil workers, killing at least 17 people. Some sources claim over 70 people were killed and as many as 800 wounded. At least 70 arrests were made, including three journalists. Striking oil workers were rounded up and allegedly tortured. One worker was beaten so badly during an “interrogation” that he died shortly afterwards at his home.

The massacre followed a lengthy, bitter strike in pursuit of better pay in Kazakhstan’s principal oil-producing region. The oil workers also called for a pay rise for teachers and doctors, and the resignation of Nazarbayev. They were striking in Zhanaozen (at UzenMunayGas, a subsidiary of the Kazakhstan state-owned KazMunayGas), and Aktau (at Karazhanbasmunai, jointly owned by KazMunayGas and the Chinese state-owned CITIC Group). They demanded that UzenMunayGas reemploy 1,800 workers, sacked because they were on strike.

Video footage of the massacre, which can be seen here, shows a heavily armed column of riot police filmed marching towards and shooting indiscriminately at protesters.

Blair’s letter to Nazarbayev was made public by the *Daily Telegraph*. Sent in July 2012 on notepaper headed “Office of Tony Blair,” the advice was offered as Nazarbayev was preparing to give a speech at the University of Cambridge that month. Blair suggested the president insert several key passages into the speech in order for it to be acceptable to the “western media”.

The letter stated, “Dear Mr President, here is a suggestion for a paragraph to include in the Cambridge

speech. I think it best to meet head on the Zhanaozen issue. The fact is you have made changes following it; but in any event these events, tragic though they were, *should not obscure the enormous progress that Kazakhstan has made. Dealing with it [the massacre] in the way I suggest, is the best way for the western media. It will also serve as a quote that can be used in the future setting out the basic case for Kazakhstan.”* [emphasis added]

The *Telegraph* reported that Blair enclosed two paragraphs of about 500 words for Nazarbayev to insert into his speech. The newspaper said, “The words written by Mr Blair but spoken by Mr Nazarbayev with some changes, were widely picked up at the time. They were used to portray Mr Nazarbayev as a visionary leader who had improved living standards in his homeland.”

In his delivered speech Nazarbayev gave the Blair script, saying, “These are questions of democracy and human rights, which must be properly addressed and have energy devoted to them.

“I understand and hear what is being said of us by our critics. But we would like this to be done with a certain sense of balance and an objective valuation of the achievements of my country.”

Blair’s letter congratulating the regime on making “enormous progress” was written just a few months after the show trial began of 37 workers and political activists who were arrested following the massacre. They were accused of participating in mass unrest, the destruction and theft of private property and the use of force against government representatives.

Thirteen defendants received multiyear prison terms, with one, Roza Tuletaeva, receiving a sentence of seven years in a prison colony. Sixteen defendants were given suspended sentences, and five were convicted but

pardoned. Just three of those on trial were acquitted.

Blair's letter to Nazarbayev ended with him offering "very best wishes", saying, "I look forward to seeing you in London! Yours ever, Tony Blair."

It is little wonder that Blair looked forward to seeing Nazarbayev at the first opportunity. Kazakhstan has reportedly paid £7.6 million each year to Tony Blair Associates (TBA) since October 2011. A number of TBA consultants have operated in the Kazakhstan capital, Astana, since 2011.

Blair established TBA after being forced to resign as prime minister and Labour Party leader in 2007.

According to a spokesperson for Blair, he "personally receives no payment" for his consultancy's work in Kazakhstan. Another Blair representative said the payments were "not for PR advice but in respect of a full-time team of people who live and work in Kazakhstan working on the reform programme of the government in areas like de-centralisation and local Government reform."

Whatever the truth of Blair and TBA's financial relationship with the Kazakhstan dictatorship, his letter to Nazarbayev is only the latest confirmation that he is the go-to man for advice for all manner of blood-soaked dictators and brutal regimes.

In its latest analysis, Human Rights Watch (HRW) concluded, "Kazakhstan's poor human rights record continued to deteriorate in 2013, with authorities cracking down on free speech and dissent through misuse of overly broad laws."

In July it was revealed that Blair is to give advice on economic policy to Egyptian president Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. After taking power in a bloody coup last year, al-Sisi heads a military junta committed to restoring the military-police state as it existed under Hosni Mubarak, prior to the 2011 Egyptian revolution. The programme is being paid for by three other antidemocratic regimes—the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

While Blair's financial shenanigans are infamously hard to decipher, with one prominent journalist devoting considerable time and effort attempting to unravel them, there is no doubt that he has become immensely rich from his consultancy and business connections. According to estimates, his personal wealth stands at £100 million, with his property holdings worth over £25 million.

His public speaking engagements alone have earned him £9 million, with £240,000 reaped for a single speech in China. His consultancy work is even more profitable. A review of the Kuwait economy by TBA was reputed to be worth £27 million. TBA also has a £1 million-a-year contract with the UAE.

Blair has many intimate ties with big business and is involved in the development of a £6 billion gas field off the coast of Gaza. In March British Gas (BG) announced it would be willing to sell its portion of a concession to exploit the gas field known as Gaza Marine. On behalf of Israel, Blair successfully pressured British Gas to negotiation with Israel over a plan entailing building a pipeline that would transport the gas to Ashkelon, an Israeli city with a refinery.

Among his other lucrative contracts was one with JP Morgan bank, for which he is paid £2 million per year. British Gas group is a major client of JP Morgan.

All this has been carried out while Blair continues in his role as a Middle East peace envoy on behalf of the United Nations, United States, the European Union and Russia.

Blair was second only to then-US President George W. Bush in planning and preparing the illegal decade-long wars of aggression in Afghanistan and Iraq. He remains an unindicted war criminal who has cashed in spectacularly on his heinous deeds. He personifies the putrefaction of a British ruling elite wallowing in obscene wealth and political filth. A mass movement of the international working class against imperialist war and social inequality will leave no stone unturned in ensuring he and his cohorts will not escape justice.



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