

Kazakhstan: The Power of Letters

Following his release from a Kazakh prison on June 17, Yuri Pak's family shared how letters sent to him and fellow prisoner of faith Yklas Kabduakasov changed their quality of life behind bars.

VOM supporters sent [1,225 letters to Yuri](#) and have so far sent [2,790 letters to Yklas](#) — who remains in prison — through www.prisoneralert.com. Though government restrictions kept the letters from reaching the two men, they were aware of them. Thankfully, the prisoners' wives received some of the letters.

"Our family is extremely grateful to each one of you for your prayers and letters with words of encouragement and faith," Yuri's wife, Olga, wrote following his release. "Your prayers and letters helped us to go through this difficult trial without losing our faith and courage. We believe that 'your labor is not in vain before the Lord.'"

God used those letters to protect Yuri and Yklas from being mistreated in prison. As the letters came in, the two men started receiving the best possible care. Prison authorities grew fearful as they realized people from other parts of the world knew their story. As a result, Yuri and Yklas were offered better food and medical care.

Although Kazakhstan's government is deemed secular, many Kazakhs are still targeted for their conversion from Islam to Christianity. Yuri and Yklas were sentenced under numerous false allegations in 2015.



Yuri, a high school teacher, had a positive influence on his community before his arrest. He also served in his church. Upon his arrest, he was falsely accused of making a bomb threat. Despite any solid evidence, he received a two-year prison sentence — likely because of his involvement in his church. In Kazakhstan, issues arise when a Kazakh converts to Christianity. A Kazakh Christian is seen as having betrayed the values and culture of their country. The government saw Yuri's church, which has its services in Kazakh and Russian, as a threat to local Muslims.

In contrast, it was the secret police who led to Yklas' imprisonment. After converting to Christianity 10 years ago, he carefully approached his fellow workers and family members about Christ. As the chief of security for a construction company, he talked to his employees about Christ in small groups.

The secret police eventually raided Yklas' home, seized his Christian literature and arrested him, eventually charging him with spreading "religious discord." Christians in Kazakhstan believe Yklas was targeted for his conversion from Islam and for sharing the gospel with Muslims. After time in prison and under house arrest, Yklas is now serving two years in a labor camp.

Earlier this year, VOM learned that Yklas receives 150 letters a day from people around the world. He told believers who spoke with him to

convey his greetings to everyone who is praying for him. Click [here](#) to send a letter of encouragement to Yklas.

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