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## Kazakhstan accuses opposition of plotting a revolution

The authorities in Kazakhstan have charged prominent opposition activists with plotting to overthrow the government, media have reported.



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Rioting in Zhanaozen on Dec 16 2011 killed 15 people. Photo: AP

By **James Kilner**, Almaty

5:34PMBST 27 Jun 2012

Vladimir Kozlov, head of the banned Alga! party, was the most high-profile opposition activist charged, according to press reports, although there has not yet been any official confirmation.

Police detained Mr Kozlov in January, in the aftermath of an anti-government riot that killed 15 people, and accused him of inciting unrest. The new charges represent a significant increase in the severity of the accusations levied against him.


The AP news agency quoted Mikhail Sizov, an Alga! party representative, as saying that Mr Kozlov could spend up to 10 years in prison if found guilty.


Mr Sizov also said that he expected Mr Kozlov's trial to begin either in July or August.


Alongside Mr Kozlov, the Kazakh authorities have also charged at least one other member of Kazakhstan's disparate opposition with plotting a revolution, local media reported.


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Human rights groups, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have previously called for the release of Mr Kozlov and other opposition activists, and described them as prisoners of conscience.

Kazakhstan has countered that the opposition activists are a threat to national security and to the stability of the country.

The riot on Dec 16 in the scruffy oil town of Zhanaozen in the west of the country posed the biggest threat to stability in Kazakhstan since independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

Since the riot, the security forces have cracked down on political activists and journalists linked to the opposition.

This month a court in Aktau, the largest town near Zhanaozen, jailed 13 people for instigating the riot. Another court also jailed five policemen in

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May for the death of the protesters.

The security services link Mr Kozlov to fugitive billionaire Mukhtar Ablyazov who has openly funded Kazakh opposition. Ablyazov fled a British court earlier this year where he had been standing trial for perjury.

In March, the security services accused Ablyazov of plotting to plant bombs in Almaty in order to incite social disorder and revolution.



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