

Mongolia

Decision adopted unanimously by the IPU Governing Council at its 205th session (Belgrade, 17 October 2019)



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MNG01 - Zorig Sanjasuuren

Alleged human rights violations

- ✓ Murder
- ✓ Impunity

A. Summary of the case

Mr. Zorig Sanjasuuren ("Mr. Zorig") was assassinated on 2 October 1998. Regarded by many as the father of the democratic movement in Mongolia in the 1990s, Mr. Zorig was a member of parliament and acting Minister of Infrastructure at the time and was being considered as a candidate for the position of Prime Minister on the day he was killed.

Between 2015 and 2017, three suspects were identified, arrested, expeditiously tried and sentenced based on classified evidence, during trials held behind closed doors. Several reports indicated that the suspects were allegedly tortured to make false confessions and framed by the intelligence services. The murder of Mr. Zorig is widely believed to have been a political assassination that was covered up. The investigation into the masterminds of his murder is still open and has not yielded any results yet.

Despite the governmental declassification order of the files relating to the Zorig case in December 2017, the lack of transparency is still prevalent as the court verdicts have remained inaccessible.

Since the submission of the complaint 20 years ago, the Committee has undertaken three fact-finding missions to

Case MNG01

Mongolia: Parliament affiliated to the IPU

Victim(s): Male parliamentarian of the majority

Qualified complainant(s): Section I 1(a) of the [Committee Procedure](#) (Annex I)

Submission of complaint(s): October 2000, March 2001, September 2015

Recent IPU decision(s): [April 2019](#)

IPU mission(s): August 2001, [September 2015](#), [September 2017](#), [June 2019](#)

Recent Committee hearing(s): Hearing with the delegation of Mongolia at the 141st IPU Assembly (October 2019)

Recent follow-up:

- Communications from the authorities: Letters from the Deputy Speaker of the State Great Hural and the Chairperson of the *Ad Hoc* Committee (October 2019)
- Communication from the complainant: October 2019
- Communications addressed to the authorities: Letters addressed to the Deputy Speaker of the State Great Hural and the Chairperson of the *Ad Hoc* Committee (October 2019)
- Communication addressed to the complainant: October 2019

Mongolia at crucial phases of the case. In June 2019, the Committee returned to Mongolia following the invitation of the parliamentary authorities and was updated on the important developments in the case, in particular the release of a video in March 2019 showing the torture and ill-treatment of two of the convicts, Ms. Chimgee and Mr. Sodnomdarjaa, as well as the establishment of a parliamentary *ad hoc* committee on the case of Mr. Zorig. The two convicts in question were transferred to the prison hospital as a result of the video and a criminal case was opened against intelligence and law enforcement officials allegedly responsible for torturing them. Nevertheless, they are still held in detention.

As part of its findings, the delegation welcomed the establishment of an *ad hoc* committee on the Zorig case (the *Ad Hoc* Committee), in line with the IPU Committee's recommendations. It also welcomed the opportunity to meet with the three convicts, as well as to watch the video tape released showing alleged acts of torture and ill-treatment. However, the delegation failed to understand the reasons preventing the immediate release of Ms. Chimgee and Mr. Sodnomdarjaa given the recent turn of events.

B. Decision

The Governing Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

1. *Thanks* the Mongolian authorities, in particular the parliamentary authorities, for their cooperation during the recent mission by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians to Mongolia and for facilitating its smooth conduct, including the meetings with the three convicts in prison; *thanks* the Mongolian delegation to the 141st IPU Assembly for meeting with the Committee;
2. *Fully endorses* the findings and recommendations contained in the mission report;
3. *Welcomes* the establishment of the parliamentary *Ad Hoc* Committee on the Zorig case, in line with the longstanding IPU recommendation; *regrets* nevertheless its limited role in ensuring due process in the ongoing investigation into the masterminds and in addressing the misgivings about the judicial proceedings against the three convicts; *hopes* that its role will be strengthened; and *wishes* to be kept informed on a regular basis of its work and of any new developments related to the case;
4. *Is pleased* that the *Ad Hoc* Committee fully supports the mission report's findings and recommendations; *is deeply concerned*, however, that members of the *Ad Hoc* Committee are now reportedly subject to several criminal cases and harassment campaigns for having revealed information about the Zorig case that should be accessible to the public at large; *fails to understand* in this regard that, despite the declassification order of 2017, the court verdicts may have been reclassified because of the ongoing investigation into the case of the torture of the two convicts; *believes* that these steps underscore that, far from truly advancing towards genuine openness and transparency, the authorities are bent on prolonging the secrecy that has dominated the case of Mr. Zorig;
5. *Considers* that any further delays in establishing the identity of those responsible for murdering Mr. Zorig, including the masterminds, are unacceptable; *firmly reiterates* that, as long as the court verdicts remain inaccessible to the public and that those with an interest in seeing justice prevail do not feel free to speak publicly about the case of Mr. Zorig, the lack of transparency continues to undermine the pursuit of justice in this case; *renews its call* for the authorities to provide copies of the court verdicts to all relevant parties, including the *Ad Hoc* Committee on the Zorig case; *urges* the authorities to allow all stakeholders, in particular the *Ad Hoc* Committee, to carry out their work without fear of reprisals;
6. *Urges* the relevant authorities to release Ms. Chimgee and Mr. Sodnomdarjaa promptly, regardless of the outcome of the proceedings in the torture case, and to seriously consider abandoning the legal proceedings against them unless there is clear evidence pointing to their responsibility, while ensuring that the people responsible for their wrongful conviction are held to account; *underlines* that the video watched by the delegation during its mission, combined with the testimonies of the three convicts, as well as evidence indicating that the convicts were framed by intelligence officers on the basis of fabricated evidence and forced confessions, are all compelling elements to justify their immediate release and to award compensation to

Ms. Chimgee and Mr. Sodnomdarjaa for the miscarriage of justice and the torture they endured; *firmly believes* that the mere fact that the authorities might not have detained and convicted the right persons demonstrates that they have not fulfilled their obligations to shed light on the true perpetrators of the crime;

7. *Recalls* that the case has long been used as a political bargaining chip by all political parties; *reiterates* that its resolution should remain a priority; and *expresses the hope* that at last justice will be done, and seen to be done, in the Zorig case;
8. *Requests* the Secretary General to convey this decision to the relevant authorities, the complainant and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information;
9. *Requests* the Committee to continue examining this case and to report back to it in due course.