

Sting Cancels Kazakh Concert Over Oil Dispute

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LONDON — British singer Sting canceled a concert in the Kazakh capital, Astana, scheduled for Monday after human rights group Amnesty International informed him about what it described as a “crackdown” on oil workers there.

Several thousand workers at UzenMunaiGas, a unit of London-listed oil producer KazMunaiGas Exploration Production, went on strike on May 26, saying their salaries had been cut and their lawyer imprisoned on false charges.

The company has called the strike illegal, and a spokesman said last week that about 250 employees had been fired for breaching their contract terms.

Sting, criticized for performing in 2009 in Uzbekistan, described the treatment of the Kazakh workers as “unacceptable.”

“Hunger strikes, imprisoned workers and tens of thousands on strike represents a virtual picket line which I have no intention of crossing,” the 59-year-old said in a statement. “The

Kazakh gas and oil workers and their families need our support and the spotlight of the international media on their situation in the hope of bringing about positive change.”

Sting’s web site said an appearance at the Astana gig would be “interpreted as an endorsement of the president’s administration and surely will go against everything he [Sting] has stood for, while supporting Amnesty and the fight for human rights, for the past 40 years.”

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