



**KAZAKHSTAN: UNPRECEDENTED ACTS OF THE
REGIME'S TERROR AGAINST CIVILIANS AND THE
RUSSIAN-LED CSTO'S MILITARY INTERVENTION**

14 January 2022

The Open Dialogue Foundation was established in Poland in 2009 on the initiative of Ukrainian student and civic activist Lyudmyla Kozlovska (who currently serves as President of the Foundation). Since its founding, statutory objectives of the Foundation include the protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in the post-Soviet area. In July 2017 area of interest of the Foundation was expanded due to the rapidly deteriorating situation in Poland and other EU member states affected by illiberal policies implemented by their populist governments. The Foundation has its permanent representations in Brussels, Warsaw and Kyiv.

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The Italian Federation for Human Rights (Federazione Italiana Diritti Umani - FIDU) is active since 1987 as Italian Helsinki Committee. FIDU promotes the protection of human rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 1950, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966, the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe of 1975, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union of 2007 and in other relevant international documents.

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Human Rights Protection Foundation Qaharman – a Kazakhstani human rights organisation which was established for the purpose of protecting fundamental human rights in Kazakhstan, in particular, the right to peaceful assembly, right to a fair trial, and right to participation in the management of state affairs, as well as freedom of speech and dissemination of information. As a public initiative, Qaharman began its activities in Kazakhstan in 2019, and in February 2020, it was officially registered. One of its leaders is Dana Zhanay. Qaharman activists monitor politically motivated trials and the right to peaceful assembly.

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The human rights movement '405' is a public initiative founded in 2019. One of its leaders is Anna Shukeyeva. The main goal of the movement is to protect participants of peaceful assemblies and bloggers who are subject to political prosecution under Article 405 of the Criminal Code of Kazakhstan ("participation in the activities of the organisation after its recognition as extremist"). The movement protects the right to peaceful expression, which should not be regarded by the authorities as 'extremism'.

Twitter: [@hr405kz](https://twitter.com/hr405kz); e-mail: movement405hr@gmail.com



Freedom Kazakhstan Foundation was founded in March 2020 in the United States by Kazakhstani philanthropist and human rights activist Barlyk Mendygazyev. On 1 September 2020, the foundation was officially registered in the US. The organisation aims to provide financial and legal aid to victims of political repression in Kazakhstan, as well as to promote the inclusion of senior Kazakhstani officials and family members of Nursultan Nazarbayev on the sanctions list under the Magnitsky Act.

Facebook: [Barlyk Mendygazyev](https://www.facebook.com/BarlykMendygazyev); e-mail: barlyk69@gmail.com



The Bostandyq Kz human rights movement intends to fight for the observance of the constitutional rights and freedoms of the citizens of Kazakhstan, and to inform about human rights violations in the country. The movement was founded on 14 September 2020 and its leaders are Daryn Khassenov, Berik Mustagulov, Kaliaskar Amrenov and Lyazzat Anafina.

Facebook: [Bostandyq Kz](https://www.facebook.com/BostandyqKz)



The human rights movement Veritas was established on 17 September 2020. The aim of the movement is to protect human rights in Kazakhstan, with special attention to freedom of speech, peaceful assembly and peaceful association. The movement monitors the implementation of Kazakhstan's commitments in the areas of human rights, environment, health and anti-corruption, and informs the EU, the UN, PACE, the OSCE, GRECO and the governments of democratic states about the results of the monitoring. Veritas conducts public campaigns to protect politically persecuted activists, political prisoners and victims of torture. The leaders of the movement are: Aliya Zhakupova, Alma Nurusheva, Gulzhanat Temirkhan, Nazym Serikpekova, Roza Musayeva.



Facebook: [Veritas human rights movement](#) ; e-mail: veritas15.09.20@gmail.com

The "Femina Virtute" human rights movement, was established on 4 November 2020, and aims to combat discrimination against women in Kazakhstan and to document violations of women's, civil and political rights. The members of the movement conduct solidarity actions in defence of human rights and train citizens to defend their rights. Based on the monitoring results, the movement provides information to the European Parliament, the European Commission, the UN, the OSCE, the Council of Europe, governments and politicians of the EU states, as well as the USA, Canada, Australia, the UK, Norway and Switzerland. The leaders of the movement are Aizhan Ismakova, Ulbolsyn Turdiyeva and Sholpan Dzhanzakova.



Facebook: [Femina Virtute](#) ; e-mail: ulbolsynturdiyeva@gmail.com

Human rights movement "Article 14" was established on 5 November 2020 with the aim of monitoring the right to fair justice in Kazakhstan. The members of the movement inform citizens of Kazakhstan and the international community about violations of the right to a fair trial, fight for greater transparency in the justice process, and draw public attention to violations during trials. The leaders of the movement are: Abaibek Sultanov, Almas Nurlybayev, Saule Aimukhametova, Bibigul Imangaliyeva.



Facebook: [Article Hrm](#) ; e-mail: article14hrm@gmail.com

The Human Rights movement Elimay was established on 17 October 2020. The movement aims to protect civil and political rights and freedoms in Kazakhstan. The movement calls to put an end to all forms of political repression and release of political prisoners in Kazakhstan. The movement's leaders are: Raigul Sadyrbayeva, Aliya Issenova, Bayan Akberdinova, Tlegen Zhubanov and Serik Chalabayev. Raigul Sadyrbayeva was arrested after drafting this report. She is under criminal prosecution now. She is faces up to 10 years imprisonment.



Facebook: [ELIMAY ~ defence of human rights in Kazakhstan](#) ; e-mail: elimayfreedom@gmail.com

Public association 'We are Against Torture' was founded in 2019. The head of the association is Elena Semenova. The organisation defends the right to protection from torture and other inhuman or degrading treatment. The association's activities are aimed at providing an immediate response in the event of torture or ill-treatment in Kazakhstan's places of detention (colonies, pre-trial detention facilities and prisons).

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This report is based on data, video and photo materials from eyewitnesses, activists, human rights defenders, peaceful protesters from more than 60 cities and villages in Kazakhstan, where protests were held. It also contains references to statements of the US, EEAS, international organisations such as the UN, OSCE, media outlets. In order to ensure safety of eyewitnesses, their names are not mentioned. Co-authors of this report Raigul Sadyrbayeva and Aiya Sadvakasova have been arrested under politically motivated criminal cases for their human rights activities. The authors of this reports express their gratitude for all informants and volunteers, who contributed to this report despite risking their lives and freedom. The authors of the report extend their condolences to families, relatives and friends of those who lost their lives during these mass repressions. We strongly believe that the truth must be unravelled and perpetrators must be held accountable.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Mass peaceful protests in Kazakhstan began on 2 January 2022 in the city of Zhanaozen in response to an increase in the price of liquefied gas.¹
- Peaceful protests rapidly spread to over 60 localities (minimum in 43 towns and 26 villages), becoming the largest mass protest in 30 years. Economic demands quickly turned into political, with tens of thousands of peaceful protesters demanding a “complete change of Nursultan Nazarbayev's regime”, i.e. systematic political reforms and building of democratic parliamentary republic.
- Police blocked and detained citizens attempting to protest on 3 and 4 January 2022.² Police initially used stun grenades and tear gas to suppress peaceful protesters.³
- The turning point in the mass peaceful protests was the emergence of government-controlled criminal groups that organised riots, arson and looting.⁴ The aim of the armed groups of looters was to discredit the peaceful protests by recording their crimes on camera. The authorities then used this footage as "justification" for the use of armed force, including a request to Putin to send the CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organisation) occupation troops to suppress peaceful anti-government protests.



People with guns in civilian clothes in a column of policemen. Almaty, 6 January 2022.

¹ <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/kazakhstan-zhanaozen-rally-gas-prices/31637309.html>

² <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ActivistsNotExtremists/posts/3170011569984771/>

³ [https://www.facebook.com/groups/ActivistsNotExtremists/posts/3166524220333506/?_cft__\[0\]=AZWEimgMNH7htlLtsZ6u6V4mAgXPuNY47x-WKmkOcaDBKGPpHZZMEHtBv9ArbI4-rVA-tMYRH-QybU3ve-UFS1kdZ3K00tvRpLR8elXwaxkIjB9Ii5kzIBdqNPiV1dmQpFH1OlzuTy3fhcgpj1DXzJEa&_tn_=%2CO%2CP-R](https://www.facebook.com/groups/ActivistsNotExtremists/posts/3166524220333506/?_cft__[0]=AZWEimgMNH7htlLtsZ6u6V4mAgXPuNY47x-WKmkOcaDBKGPpHZZMEHtBv9ArbI4-rVA-tMYRH-QybU3ve-UFS1kdZ3K00tvRpLR8elXwaxkIjB9Ii5kzIBdqNPiV1dmQpFH1OlzuTy3fhcgpj1DXzJEa&_tn_=%2CO%2CP-R)

⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ActivistsNotExtremists/posts/3169993106653284/>

- In some towns part of the military and police officers sided with the mass of peaceful protesters: they joined the ranks of the protesters, hugged them and shook their hands.⁵ The authorities, fearing the loss of power, has addressed Putin to use the CSTO troops to suppress peaceful protests. The CSTO/Putin troops sent into Kazakhstan should be seen as a violation of international obligations, a military intervention and a violation of the country's sovereignty, since the popular protests are an internal affair of the country. This sets a dangerous precedent for the future use of the CSTO/Putin military to suppress popular protests that are fighting a dictatorship.
- Numerous eyewitness reports, videos from the scene, Tokayev's order to "shoot without warning", indicate that the security forces shot civilians.⁶ The authorities does not publish the names of the dead, the wounded, those who were arrested and those who are missing. Meanwhile, morgues and hospitals are guarded by armed soldiers who shoot at journalists' feet to prevent them from filming arrests and human rights violations.⁷ Police and NSC officers use force, threats and criminal prosecution to force eyewitnesses to delete videos and photos from the sites of mass protests, human rights violations and shootings of civilians.
- In order to justify the shootings and the arrival of occupation troops, the regime claimed that Kazakhstan had been attacked by "20,000 international terrorists".⁸ As "proof" of the presence of terrorists in Kazakhstan, the authorities showed on national television Vikram Ruzakhunov, a well-known musician from Kyrgyzstan.⁹ In a video from the temporary detention facility, Ruzakhunov stated that he came to participate in the protests for allegedly "200 dollars". His face, however, showed signs of beatings resulting from torture. International criticism forced the Kazakhstani authorities to release Ruzakhunov, but no one has been held responsible for the torture.¹⁰ This example shows that no terrorists, much less international terrorists, stand behind the protests in Kazakhstan.
- Questions raised in public about the "20,000 terrorists" have stumped the authorities. To justify himself, President Tokayev said, "Bandits attacked morgues at night, taking and carrying away bodies of their dead accomplices. They also took away the bodies of fighters directly from the battlefield."¹¹
- To justify their brutal crackdown on protesters, the shooting of peaceful protesters and residents and the deployment of CSTO troops, Kazakhstani authorities insist, "We are faced with a hybrid terrorist attack on Kazakhstan aimed at destabilising and overthrowing it. Here there was a conspiracy by internal and certain external forces, since both Kazakhstani and foreign nationals were involved."¹²
- Tokayev explicitly said that the Internet was shut down in Kazakhstan because of activists and human rights activists because they "put themselves above the law and think they have the right to gather wherever they want and say whatever they want".¹³ Tokayev has also accused activists, human rights defenders and the free media of inciting unrest.¹⁴ In reality activists and human rights defenders have consistently advocated only peaceful protests, and the independent media have been engaged in coverage of socially important processes. As a result, human rights defenders, activists and independent media have been deprived of the opportunity to gather

⁵ <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/05/01/2022/61d557579a794723d7b45d31>

⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ActivistsNotExtremists/posts/3172735976378997/>

⁷ https://tvrain.ru/news/v_almaty_zhurnalistsam_dozhdiya_i_the_insider_streljali_pod_nogi-545382/

⁸ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-59907235>

⁹ <https://www.dw.com/ru/v-kazahstane-vydali-za-pogromshhika-dzhazovogo-muzykanta/a-60372847>

¹⁰ <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/31646954.html>

¹¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/10/foreign-meddling-behind-kazakhstan-unrest-putin-claims>

¹² [https://litter.kz/my-stolknulis-s-takoi-gibridnoi-terroristicheskoi-atakoi-na-kazakhstan-erlan-karin-1641791031/amp/;](https://litter.kz/my-stolknulis-s-takoi-gibridnoi-terroristicheskoi-atakoi-na-kazakhstan-erlan-karin-1641791031/amp/)

¹³ <https://www.interfax.ru/world/814451>

¹⁴ <https://cutt.ly/vU5gZDe>

¹⁴ <https://www.currenttime.tv/a/31644196.html>

- In order to stop the coordination of protests, the authorities has been targeting opponents abroad. On 6 January 2022, Ukrainian Security Service officers threatened Yeldos Nasipbekov and Zamanbek Tleuliyev, coordinators of the DCK movement who live in Kyiv, with deportation for carrying out opposition activities. The SSU officers beat Tleuliyev and forced Nasipbekov to sign a statement refusing to conduct opposition activities and coordinate protests in Kazakhstan.²²
- The authorities continue to hold 16 political prisoners²³ in custody. The belief of the European External Action Service and the EU embassy in Kazakhstan in so-called "political reforms" and a "listening state", a policy of quiet diplomacy, silencing the names of political prisoners in public space and a selective approach in meetings with civil society representatives, has led to this allowing the Kazakhstani authorities to launch mass repressions against civilians.
- Findings of official investigation of the authorities are by default incredible and unreliable due to the fact that there is no independent law enforcement and judiciary. Kazakhstan has not conducted a single independent, thorough and transparent investigation of, for example, repressions, political killings.
- The soft response of democratic governments, the OSCE, and the UN allows the regime to unleash even greater political repression and terror against the people of Kazakhstan.²⁴ To stop the bloodshed, the torture of civilians, personal sanctions should be imposed on Nursultan Nazarbayev and members of his family (Timur Kulibayev, Dariga Nazarbayeva, Kairat Satybaldy, First Deputy of the National Security Committee Samat Abish), Head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Yerlan Turgumbayev, General Prosecutor Gizat Nurdauletov, Head of the Ministry of Defence Murat Bektanov for gross human rights violations and corruption.

2. THE CAUSE OF THE PROTESTS

The **trigger** for the mass peaceful protests was the increase in the price of liquefied gas, which is used by many citizens in western Kazakhstan. However, the **main reason** for the mass protests has been a long-standing political demand for a complete change of power. The demand "Shal, ket!" (Old man, leave!), which was heard in the squares of the cities, implied a demand for the resignation of the first president, Nursultan Nazarbayev, and his family members and entourage. The total corruption, incompetence of the government, absence of independent justice system, violation of civil liberties, and business raids have led to significant social stratification of the population. Nazarbayev's family and entourage used all the resources of the country as their own. At the same time, the citizens of the country were so impoverished that they were forced to take out loans to buy food and to feed their livestock with cardboard.

Therefore, on 2 January 2022 an increase in the price of autogas triggered a peaceful protest by tens of thousands of Zhanaozen residents demanding to cut the price of autogas in half. On 3-6 January, peaceful protests spread to more than 60 cities and towns, with the political demand "Shal, ket!". These protests were the largest in the years of Kazakhstan's independence and were characterised by a single clear demand for a complete change in the authorities. Falling monument to Nazarbayev, the widespread dismantling of street and avenue nameplates bearing Nazarbayev's name across Kazakhstan became a demonstration of citizens' weariness of dictatorship, poverty, powerlessness and corruption. The desire

²² <https://www.facebook.com/lyudmyla.kozlovska/posts/10220836385801899>

²³ Mendygazyev Bekizhan, Amirov Erulan, Chuprina Igor, Ginatullin Ruslan, Yelshibayev Yerzhan, Kusmankyzy Saltanat, Jussupov Baurzhan, Dauletiyarova Nataliya, Batkayev Rinat, Yeskhozin Yerbol, Kayyrbek Askar, Akhmetov Ulasbek, Zheksebayev Askhat, Klyshev Kairat, Rakhimzhanov Noyan, Begimbetov Abai.

²⁴ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/01/08/kazakhstan-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union-on-the-situation/>; <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/us-un-call-for-restraint-in-kazakhstan-amid-protests/2466510>
<https://www.osce.org/chairmanship/509687> https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/109425/kazakhstan-statement-spokesperson-latest-developments_en

of citizens to build and live in a democratic country outweighed the fear of repression of Nazarbayev's 30-year dictatorship.

3. DYNAMICS AND GEOGRAPHY OF PROTESTS

Peaceful protests started on 2 January 2022 in the cities of Zhanaozen and Aktau in western Kazakhstan. Rallies in Zhanaozen and in Aktau continued on the next day, 3 January 2022. The protest was supported by citizens from villages in Atyrau, Aktobe and Mangistau regions.

On 4 January 2022, people began to go on peaceful protests in various settlements and cities across the biggest part of Kazakhstan. They were also joined by workers from oil companies. The centre of the protests was the Mangystau region. On 4 January 2022, people marched in peaceful protests in support of Zhanaozen in the following cities and towns:

- Zhanaozen, Aktau, Atyrau, Aktobe, Uralsk, Taraz, Kokshetau, Kostanay, Astana, Almaty, Shymkent, Turkestan, Kyzylorda, Karaganda, Zhezkazgan, Semey, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Petropavlovsk, Ekibastuz, Pavlodar, Kulsary, Karazhanbas, Aksai, Fort-Shevchenko, Kaskelen, Tengiz, Aral, Taldykorgan, Merke, Ayagoz, Balkhash, Arys, Issyk, Arkalyk, Shukur.

Even in these villages people came to the squares in front of the akimats (local executive body):

- Akshukur, Beineu, Dossor, Ondy, Zhanakala, Zhetybai, Zhetysai, Kalamkas, Makanchi, Shetpe, Inder, Kuryk, Shelek, Sekseul, Akzhar, Shieli, Kazaly, Karsakpai, Koloska, Shardara, Bayanaul, Khromtau.

The number of protesters by then numbered in the tens of thousands. In the evening of 4 January 2022, tens of thousands of people protested and marched peacefully in Kazakhstan's largest city, Almaty. Police and National Guard officers used tear gas, rubber bullets and stun grenades against the crowd of peaceful protesters in front of the city administration. As a result, the protesters were forced to retreat.

On 5 January 2022, peaceful protests continued in various regions where people continued to demand regime change. On this day, in the following cities, protesters entered and filled city akimats (local executive bodies): Almaty, Semey, Aktobe, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Atyrau. Besides, in Taldykorgan protesters demolished a monument to Nazarbayev in front of the akimat. In all towns, where rallies involving hundreds or thousands of protesters took place, people gathered in central squares and near akimats. In some cities, protesters remained inside, while in some, they checked that the buildings were empty, closed the premises and left, remaining in the square in front of the akimats.

By 5 January 2022, peaceful protests were taking place in the following 43 cities in Kazakhstan:

- Zhanaozen, Aktau, Atyrau, Aktobe, Uralsk, Taraz, Kokshetau, Kostanay, Astana, Almaty, Shymkent, Turkestan, Kyzylorda, Karaganda, Zhezkazgan, Semey, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Petropavlovsk, Ekibastuz, Pavlodar, Kulsary, Aksai, Fort-Shevchenko, Kaskelen, Aral, Taldykorgan, Merke, Zhetysai, Ayagoz, Balkhash, Arys, Issyk, Arkalyk, Kandyagash, Kazalinsk, Khromtau, Saryagash, Shardara, Ereymentau, Mangystau, Shu, Shalkar, Zhanakorgan.

There were also peaceful protests in at least 26 villages:

- Karazhanbas, Tengiz, Makanchi, Beineu, Akshukur, Karmakshy, Ondy, Zhanakala, Zhetybai, Shieli, Kalamkas, Shetpe, Inder, Kuryk, Shelek, Sekseul, Akzhar, Karsakpai, Koloska, Bayanaul, Inderbor, Karkaraly, Torgai, Makat, Karaturyk and Kenkyak.

At the same time (5 January 2022) a column of many thousands of protesters and some of the police and National Guard officers who had taken their side approached the city administration building in Almaty with the aim of entering it and announcing that power had been returned to the people. Similar tactics -

peaceful entry into city administrations - have been adopted in several other regions. The opposition "DCK" movement, recognised as a peaceful opposition movement by the European Parliament, has called for peaceful entry (not seizure) into city administrations and for announcing that power has been returned to the people, as has happened in Armenia. At the same time, the "DCK" repeatedly stressed that entry into administrative buildings should be peaceful, without riots, arson or the use of violence.

However, almost everywhere, peaceful protesters were met with tear gas, stun grenades, bullets and mass arrests. Realising the imminent loss of power, the regime decided to discredit peaceful protest to justify the use of armed force. According to numerous eyewitness reports and videos it became clear that the regime organised criminal groups for looting, arson, use of violence against law enforcement officers, which was done on the evening of 5 January 2022 in Almaty, and later in other cities.

The subsequent use of the army, Tokayev's public order to shoot without warning and the fact of firing real bullets at civilians, including protesters, gradually led to the decline of the protest movement.

At this stage, due to the total blockage of the internet in Kazakhstan, it is not possible to document that Russian and Belarusian occupation troops, like the CSTO, have been used against civilians. There is video of mass shootings by the military, but from the security purposes of the authors of the video, as well as the lack of identifying marks, it is difficult to identify who exactly was shooting.



A group of Kazakh security forces fire automatic weapons at protesters. Almaty, 6 January 2022.

Protest organisers

There are no organisers of the protests that began on 2 January 2022 in Kazakhstan. But on 3 January, 2022, the leader of the opposition movement "Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan", Mukhtar Ablyazov, conducted a live broadcast on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, calling on all Kazakhstanis to join the peaceful protests on 4 January 2022 at 12:00 and supporting the Zhanaozen protesters. The "DCK" also called upon the police and army to take the side of the people and not to use force against civilians. On 5 January 2022, the opposition movement "DCK" made a public statement and warned of preparation of provocations by the authorities to discredit peaceful protesters.

Protesters

It is crucial to draw a clear line between three groups of people:

- most peaceful protesters;
- criminal groups controlled and organised by the authorities for looting, arson and pogroms;
- a small proportion of protesters, probably marginalised, who joined those involved in the riots and looting.

This classification makes it clear that initially, and for the most part, the protesters are peaceful, unarmed citizens of Kazakhstan who want democratic change.



Arman Dzhumageldiyev (also known as "Wild Arman")

Criminal groups linked to Arman Dzhumageldiyev (also known as "Wild Arman"), the nephews of Nursultan Nazarbayev, Samat Abish and Kairat Satybaldy, and the brother of Nursultan Nazarbayev, Bolat Nazarbayev, organised riots, arson and looting to discredit peaceful protests. This became known through the testimonies of people on the ground. These criminal groups wore masks, acted in an organised manner and purposefully filmed their actions. It was recorded that on some occasions armed persons in masks and civilian clothes marched in formation with police officers. The same happened in Zhanaozen in 2011, when state-controlled groups staged pogroms to discredit peaceful protests and justify shooting of peaceful protesters by law enforcement. At that time, the police opened fire during a peaceful strike of oil workers.

A third, small group of people initially joined the protest and after the organised riots and looting had begun. Probably because of their extremely low socio-economic status, they took advantage of the situation and joined the organised looting. This classification allows areas of responsibility to be identified.

Reaction of the authorities

On 4 January 2022, President Tokayev called peaceful protesters (by this time there were no publicly recorded facts of vandalism) who demanded the change of regime - "destructive persons, interested in undermining the stability and unity of our country". In other words, from the beginning, the authorities regarded the peaceful protesters as a threat to their own dictatorship.

On 5 January 2022, in an attempt to pacify peaceful protesters across the country, Tokayev dismissed the government and blamed the rise in prices on the Ministry of Energy, but it did not succeed. On the same day, 5 January 2022, a state of emergency was declared to stop the protests, justify the repression and shut down the internet to conceal the extent of the repression.

On 5 January 2022, Tokayev described protesters and regime-organised looters as "mobs of bandits", and on that day declared that "international terrorist gangs" were operating in the country. On 7 January 2022, Tokayev tweeted that "the city of Almaty was under attack by 20,000 terrorists", but he later deleted his tweet.

On 7 January 2022, Tokayev publicly stated an order to law enforcement agencies and the army to "shoot without warning", which is a violation not only of Kazakhstani law, but also of Kazakhstan's international obligations. On 9 January 2022, the Minister of Internal Affairs, Yerlan Turgumbayev, stated that: "The

criminals disguised themselves as police and military officers and committed illegal acts"²⁵ in order to justify the killing of civilians. In this way, the regime wants to shift the responsibility for civilian shootings onto the mythical 20,000 terrorists.



Peaceful protesters and civil activists were shot dead such as Nuraliya Aitkulova (on 6 January 2022) from Almaty and Aitbai Aliyev from Kyzylorda.²⁶ Three members of family (peaceful civilians) from Taldykorgan Nurbolat Seitkulov, Altynai Yetayeva and their 15-year-old daughter were shot dead reportedly by the military on 8 January 2022.²⁷

Three members of family from Taldykorgan who were shot during dispersal of a peaceful protest. Nurbolat Seitkulov, Altynai Yetayeva and their 15-year-old daughter

On 7 January 2022, Tokayev accused activists and human rights defenders, as well as free media, of instigating the "unrest". However, it is activists and human rights defenders who have consistently stressed the importance of peaceful protests, while the free media have engaged in professional activities to report on socially important processes. Tokayev explicitly said that the Internet was shut down in Kazakhstan because of activists and human rights activists because they "put themselves above the law and think they have the right to gather wherever they want and say whatever they want".²⁸



Peaceful protesters killed by Kazakhstani security forces. From left to right: Aitbay Aliyev, Murat Abrayev, Nuraliya Aitkulova, Muratkhon Bazarbayev.

On 5 January 2022, Karim Massimov was removed as head of the NSC. On 8 January 2022, the NSC press office said he was detained on suspicion of treason and put in a pre-trial detention facility. The Kazakhstani authorities are likely to blame him for the so-called invasion of Kazakhstani territory by foreign terrorists.

²⁵ https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/prestupniki-pereodevalis-formu-politsii-voennyih-glava-mvd-458520/

²⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ActivistsNotExtremists/posts/3172729986379596/>

²⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ActivistsNotExtremists/posts/3172735976378997/>

²⁸ <https://cutt.ly/vU5gZDe>



Vikram Ruzakhunov

In order to provide 'evidence of an attack by international terrorists', a national television channel broadcast on 9 January 2022 a national of Kyrgyzstan, Vikram Ruzakhunov, a well-known jazz musician. On television, beaten by police officers, he stated that he had "come to Kazakhstan to participate in the protests, allegedly being unemployed from Kyrgyzstan". Giving false evidence against oneself as a result of torture is a frequent technique of authoritarian regimes. For example, in Belarus

in May 2021, dictator Lukashenko ordered a European airline's plane, flying over Belarus with journalist Roman Protasevich on board, to land. As a result of pressure and torture, Roman Protasevich pleaded guilty and praised Alexander Lukashenko.

However, without giving a single proof of the existence of the 20,000 terrorists who allegedly attacked Almaty, President Tokayev said on 10 January 2022, during a meeting of the CSTO Council: "It is no accident that bandits attacked morgues at night, took away and transported dead bodies of their accomplices. They also took away the bodies of fighters directly from the battlefield. This is the practice of international terrorists of known origins. This is how they cover their tracks." Each subsequent absurd statement by Tokayev has confirmed more and more that there was no attack by 20,000 terrorists.

So far, the authorities have not provided an explanation for the targets of the terrorist attacks on Almaty, given that all of the republic's authorities are located in another part of the country, in the city of Nursultan. Nor have the authorities publicly provided information about the origins of the so-called terrorists, other than Tokayev's statement about their "known origins."

On 10 January 2022, Kazakhstan's Secretary of State Yerlan Karimov claimed that the Almaty Police Department repelled allegedly six terrorist attacks. According to the official version, the department "held its defence from midnight to 5:00 on the night of 6 January 2022".

To justify their actions in violently suppressing protests, shooting peaceful protesters and residents, and sending in the CSTO troops, the Kazakhstani authorities insist: "We have faced a hybrid terrorist attack on Kazakhstan with the aim of destabilising and overthrowing the power. Here there is a conspiracy by internal and certain external forces, as both Kazakhstani and foreign nationals were involved," he said.

Information blockade

With an increasing number of peaceful protesters across the country coordinating their actions via messengers and social networks, the regime imposed restrictions on mobile internet, social networks and messengers on 4 January 2022. As early as 5 January 2022, the authorities shut down the internet completely across the country, with subsequent intermittent activations of the internet for a few hours and at low speeds. The internet shutdown not only affected the decline of protest movements, but also created an information vacuum at a time when citizens were in greater need of honest and up-to-date information about what was happening in the country. Moreover, the authorities used the Internet blackout to conceal the facts of crimes against civilians, as people are



unable to send video files of shootings, torture and dispersal of peaceful protesters. The internet blockade lasted until 10 January 2022).

At the same time, the regime has filled the information vacuum with state propaganda through state media and controlled bloggers, promoting its own version of what happened to both the domestic audience and the international community. The desire to hide the facts of his crimes is also confirmed by the fact that foreign journalists accredited in Kazakhstan, such as Joanna Lillis in particular, have been denied entry into Kazakhstan. Tokayev, in his speech of 7 January 2022, accused activists of "shutting down" the internet in Kazakhstan, even though only the authorities have the power to shut down and restore the Internet connection.

Journalists Lukpan Akhmedyarov and Daryn Nursapar were subjected to administrative arrests and Ardak Erubaeva was searched for the fact that they were covering the protests. Several journalists came under fire or were beaten while carrying out their duties: Vasili Polonsky, Vasili Krestianinov, Saniya Toyken, Almaz Toleke, Yesenzhol Yelekenov, Almaz Kaysar, Farhat Abilov, Ruslan Pryanikov. In addition, the police detained journalists and forced them to remove photos and videos documenting the dispersal of rallies and the use of force against protesters. Journalists Bagdat Asylbek and Serik Yesenov, in particular, faced this problem. On 6 January 2022, the driver for "Almaty TV" Muratkhon Bazarbayev was shot dead while Diasken Baytibaev, an employee of the same TV channel, was injured as the result of shooting.²⁹



Activist Aset Abishev after being beaten by police officers

Deployment of the CSTO/Russian troop

Tens of thousands of protesters across the country and the defection of police and army officers had thrown the The authorities into a state of terror. They realised that they could lose power, so on 5 January 2022, criminal groups organised by the authorities started riots, arson, looting and violence to discredit the peaceful protesters. Videos made by the marauders themselves from the sites of the riots served as justification for the authorities' use of armed force against civilians and a request to the CSTO/Putin to deploy troops into Kazakhstan. The looters (organised by the authorities themselves) were presented as 'international terrorists' and the formal reason³⁰ for the CSTO foreign troops to enter Kazakhstan. Formally, the CSTO mission in Kazakhstan was led by Russian General Andrey Serdyukov, who is known

²⁹ <https://rsf.org/en/news/rsf-refers-violence-against-reporters-covering-protests-kazakhstan-un>

³⁰ One of the reasons for the decision to send in CSTO troops is the existence of an external threat.

for leading the operation to occupy Crimea in 2014 and for leading the Russian military intervention in Syria in 2019³¹.

However, during the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia in 2021, armed clashes in Kyrgyzstan in 2010, the CSTO/Putin did not send their troops despite their commitments. But in the case of mass peaceful protests in Kazakhstan, which is an internal affair, the CSTO/Putin troops were sent to Kazakhstan. The arrival of the CSTO/Putin troops should be seen as a military intervention to support an authoritarian regime. This sets a dangerous precedent for the future use of the CSTO/Putin military to suppress popular protests that are fighting a dictatorship.

The shooting of peaceful protesters and detention of thousands

As a consequence of the total blocking of the Internet, as of 13 January 2022, the scale of repression is known only from official figures and amounts to 10,000 detainees³² and 494 criminal cases.³³ The authorities do not disclose data on the actual number of deaths. On 9 January 2022 the authorities reported that 164 people were killed, most of them civilians. However, the authorities immediately stated that this was a "technical error" and the real number of those killed remains unknown.

These figures show that the authorities are politically persecuting peaceful protesters. According to reports from people in various cities and evidence of torture received by human rights defenders, detainees have been beaten, denied medical treatment, the help of lawyers, denied water and food for long periods, and kept in detention facilities without documents. The authorities use administrative arrests and fines for allegedly "violating the law on peaceful assemblies" and threats of criminal prosecution against protesters. The whereabouts, conditions of detention and whether detainees have access to medical care and lawyers remain unknown. Thus, the authorities' statements about compliance with international obligations on the right to peaceful protest and respect for civil liberties do not correspond to reality.

4. POLITICAL PERSECUTION OF OPPONENTS ABROAD



Zamanbek Tleuliyev and Yeldos Nasipbekov

On 6 January 2022 the Security Service of Ukraine (SSU) attacked **Zamanbek Tleuliyev**, coordinator of the opposition DCK movement³⁴, in Kyiv. As a result, the activist sustained multiple bruises, four teeth were knocked out and another tooth was damaged. SSU officers threatened the activist Tleuliyev with deportation for carrying out opposition activities in Kazakhstan on Ukrainian territory. The SSU officers and the Ukrainian police under pressure forced the 14-year-old neighbour and his mother to give false testimony. This is how the SSU officers hoped to conceal the use of brute force, which resulted in Tleuliyev having his teeth knocked out during an attempt to detain him. On the same evening, SSU officers pressured **Yeldos Nasipbekov**, another DCK coordinator, to sign a receipt and make a video statement stating that he would stop coordinating protests and engaging in

³¹ <https://euromaidanpress.com/2022/01/08/russian-general-in-charge-of-crimea-occupation-to-lead-pro-russian-military-mission-in-kazakhstan/>

³² <https://www.currenttime.tv/a/mvd-kazahstana-soobschilo-o-zaderzhanii-pochti-10-tysyach-uchastnikov-protestov/31648571.html>

³³ <https://tengrinews.kz/crime/besporjadki-v-kazahstane-nazvano-kolichestvo-arestovannykh-459123/>

³⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/lyudmyla.kozlovska/posts/10220836385801899>

opposition activities in Kazakhstan. Otherwise, the officers threatened to deport him immediately to Kazakhstan.

The case of Tleuliyev and Nasipbekov is not the first occasion when Ukrainian authorities are helping Kazakhstan to carry out political persecution. Not having extradition treaties with most EU countries, Kazakhstan turned to Ukraine and Russia for assistance in the case of Mukhtar Ablyazov, the leader of opposition movement “Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan”. Representatives of the Kazakhstani authorities prepared draft charges for the Ukrainian and Russian investigations and gave them direct instructions on the case of Mukhtar Ablyazov.^{35 36}



Multiple bruises on Tleuliyev as a result of SSU attack

For instance, Ukraine and Russia have simultaneously requested the extradition of Ablyazov's colleague, Tatiana Paraskevich from the Czech Republic, and the Czech Republic has refused both times. The Czech Republic provided Paraskevich with international protection (asylum) due to the political nature of the case.

Given the attack on coordinators of the “DCK” movement in Kyiv, there is reason to believe that the Kazakhstani regime may take similar action against “DCK” leader Ablyazov in France, or step up its influence on the French intelligence agencies in order to further persecute Ablyazov.



Mukhtar Ablyazov

Mukhtar Ablyazov is the *de facto* leader of the opposition “Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan” (DCK) movement. He has been persecuted by the Kazakhstani authorities since 2001.³⁷ He has been forced to leave Kazakhstan. Ablyazov is the main opponent of the Nazarbayev regime. The massive crackdown on activists in Kazakhstan in recent years is linked to their support of the political, economic and social reforms proposed by Ablyazov. In short, from March 2018 till December 2021 the authorities of Kazakhstan have arbitrarily detained over 7,500 peaceful protesters.³⁸

On 9 December 2016, the French Council of State stressed the political nature of the case against Ablyazov.³⁹ On 29 September 2020, the

National Asylum Court of France granted him refugee status. The French court noted that the fraud-related criminal charges against Ablyazov in the case of BTA Bank are politically motivated and are used as a weapon to retaliate against his opposition activities. The court stated that “the political engagement of Mr. Ablyazov is still relevant and that his movement is prohibited in Kazakhstan”, and also that “arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial detentions and the torture of opponents in prison are in fact methods commonly practised by the Kazakh authorities.”⁴⁰ Besides, the French court stressed the unlawful,

³⁵ <https://www.letemps.ch/suisse/opposants-kazakhs-piste-lenlevement-passait-vevey>

<https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/international/140216/loligarque-kazakh-ablyazov-denonce-une-justice-francaise-lecoute-de-moscou>

³⁶ <https://en.odfoundation.eu/a/7508,prominent-russian-human-rights-activists-salled-for-preventing-the-extradition-of-mukhtar-ablyazov>

³⁷ <https://www.ft.com/content/1411b1a0-a310-11e7-9e4f-7f5e6a7c98a2>

³⁸ <https://en.odfoundation.eu/a/32928,oppositionist-therefore-extremist/>

<https://en.odfoundation.eu/a/32928,oppositionist-therefore-extremist/>

<https://pace.coe.int/en/files/27671>

<https://pace.coe.int/en/files/28587>

³⁹ <https://www.conseil-etat.fr/ressources/decisions-contentieuses/dernieres-decisions-importantes/ce-9-decembre-2016-m.-o>

⁴⁰ <https://en.odfoundation.eu/content/uploads/2020/10/court-decision-ablyazov-mukhtar-english-final.pdf>

https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2020/10/05/la-france-accorde-l-asile-politique-au-principal-opposant-kazakh_6054817_3210.html

extrajudicial attempts by Kazakhstani authorities to interfere with the British and French judiciary as well as extrajudicial means aimed at targeting Ablyazov.⁴¹

The decision of the National Asylum Court of France was mentioned in the European Parliament's resolution of 11 February 2021. The Resolution notes that the court "granted political asylum to the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan founder, Mukhtar Ablyazov, who was sentenced by a Kazakh court to life imprisonment in absentia in violation of the right to defence, noting the systemic and political nature of Kazakhstan's repressive apparatus and its misuse of civil and criminal proceedings".⁴²

Failing to obtain Ablyazov's extradition, the Kazakhstani authorities, with the help of abusive mutual legal assistance claims, succeeded in initiating criminal investigations against him in France. The investigation is based on the Kazakhstani criminal case of BTA Bank, which was found to be politically motivated by French courts. It should be noted that, on 29 September 2020, the National Asylum Court of France stressed: "the mere reference to the British civil decisions (...) is not sufficient to establish the existence of serious reasons to believe that Mr. Ablyazov is the author of a serious crime of common law committed in his country of origin ... all of the facts and accusations imputed to Mr. Ablyazov concerning alleged massive fraud committed to the prejudice of the BTA bank come from or are based on criminal proceedings opened in Kazakhstan or in the Russian Federation, the political motive of which was established in France by the Council of State and by Interpol and therefore emanate from the agent of persecution. ... there are serious reasons to believe that the civil and criminal proceedings brought against Mr. Ablyazov under cover of the action of the BTA in Kazakhstan or in other foreign jurisdictions are in fact motivated by political aim".

Ablyazov learned about this investigation on 5 October 2020 when, having already received refugee status, he was arrested. Two days later, he was released on bail.⁴³ He reports that in Paris he is regularly subjected to surveillance, including being monitored by agencies hired by the Kazakhstani authorities.⁴⁴

On 13 January 2022, the Paris Appeals Court issued a decision to drop criminal charges against Mukhtar Ablyazov.⁴⁵

In September 2020, shortly after the French court ruled to grant asylum to Ablyazov, a new disinformation campaign against the opposition politician began. Evidence suggests that the massive information attacks were co-ordinated by the Kazakhstani authorities. Publications on French information sources appeared simultaneously or at minimal intervals, and consisted of identical subject matter, messages and even wording. The key message of the smear campaign was that the "dangerous criminal" Ablyazov "does not deserve" refugee status. Such publications have continued to appear for more than a year on French-language right-wing information sources, or websites that also publish articles glorifying the achievements of the Kazakhstani authorities. The disinformation campaign is implemented through websites such as Atlantico.fr, Causier.fr, Confluences.fr, LaDiplomatie.fr, JuriGuide.com, EurasiaTimes.org⁴⁶. These websites refer to each other or have common authors. Anonymous blogs on various media outlets are

⁴¹ "(...) there are also precise, serious and consistent elements which highlight the clear attempts by external agents to exert influence on the asylum authorities and to get them to make decisions unfavorable to Mr. Ablyazov. ... This Court of Law also deplores overt attempts by third parties to influence the meaning of its decision."

⁴² The European Parliament resolution of 11 February 2021 on the human rights situation in Kazakhstan, Para T, available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0056_EN.html

⁴³ According to the bail terms, Ablyazov must pay 50,000 euros each month for 10 months. The defence side notes that Mukhtar Ablyazov does not have these funds. Currently, Ablyazov has appealed the terms of his bail, requesting to change the pre-trial restrictive measures. There is still a risk that Ablyazov will be arrested again.

⁴⁴ <https://www.ft.com/content/1411b1a0-a310-11e7-9e4f-7f5e6a7c98a2>

⁴⁵ <https://www.barrons.com/amp/news/france-drops-legal-probe-against-kazakh-opposition-figure-01642095607>

⁴⁶ <https://www.atlantico.fr/article/decryptage/-il-y-a-beaucoup-de-liens-et-depuis-longtemps-entre-l-europe-et-le-kazakhstan--aymeric-bourdin-askar-abdrakhmanov-timur-sultangozhin>

<https://www.atlantico.fr/article/decryptage/abliazov-un-delinquant-financier-dissimule-derriere-le-statut-de-refugie-politique--herve-guyader>

<https://www.causeur.fr/le-kazakhstan-est-un-discret-geant-de-la-diplomatie-mondiale-164892>

<https://www.causeur.fr/moukhtar-abliazov-kazakhstan-185423>

<https://www.confluences.fr/2020/12/kazakhstan-elections-democratisation/>

<https://www.confluences.fr/2020/12/moukhtar-abliazov-monde-entier/>

<https://blogs.mediapart.fr/al1875/blog>

also used for information attacks. It is noteworthy that immediately after the release of these defamatory publications they are reprinted by state propaganda media.

In July 2021 it was reported that Ablyazov was on the list of persons that Kazakhstan had spied on using the "Pegasus" spy programme⁴⁷. In addition, Kazakhstan also ordered surveillance against two French nationals, Martin Villom and Quentin Guillemain, allegedly linked to Ablyazov's case. In 2017, Quentin Guillemain was involved in organising a public meeting of Mukhtar Ablyazov with the Amnesty International human rights defenders in France.⁴⁸



Bota Jardemalie

As part of the Mukhtar Ablyazov case, **Bota Jardemalie**, a political refugee and lawyer for Ablyazov, has also faced massive black PR in some English-language media.⁴⁹ A European Parliament resolution of 11 February 2021 underlines that Kazakhstani authorities have abused Interpol and interstate legal assistance mechanisms to persecute and seize documents from Bota Jardemalie.

In October 2019, at the request of Kazakhstan, the Belgian police searched Jardemalie's flat and questioned her about her legal and human rights activities. Present during the search were two unknown Kazakhstani officials, who were allowed to remain without police supervision and photographed the seized documents.

Jardemalie had computers, cellphones, and information storage media seized, as well as documents containing confidential and privileged

attorney-client information. She demands that these things be returned, and her request has been submitted to the Constitutional Court of Belgium for a review on the subject of discriminatory treatment against a refugee and a lawyer. On 13 January 2022, the Constitutional Court of Belgium made a historical decision recognizing that Jardemalie's rights under the Constitution of Belgium and the European Convention on Human Rights violated due to the absence of a judicial remedy in connection the seizure of her documents and devices executed at the request for mutual legal assistance from Kazakhstan.⁵⁰

Jardemalie has been under surveillance and was subjected to an attempted abduction in Belgium. According to a Belgian prosecutor, the perpetrators of the crime are likely to be associated with the Kazakhstani authorities. On 29 November 2019, the Brussels Court sentenced three persons who had been spying on Jardemalie to two years' imprisonment, partly with suspended sentences.⁵¹ On 15 September 2021, the Brussels Appeals Court confirmed the decision of the lower court.⁵²

Another example is the case of **Barlyk Mendygazyev**, who was subjected to political criminal prosecution after he became an engaged human rights activist. He founded the Freedom Kazakhstan Foundation in the USA to combat systemic human rights abuses in authoritarian Kazakhstan. Barlyk Mendygazyev provides financial and humanitarian assistance to the families of Kazakhstani political prisoners and promotes personal sanctions against Nursultan Nazarbayev and his entourage in the United States. At the moment, Kazakhstan's National Security Committee is fabricating documents for an extradition request in relation to Barlyk Mendygazyev and to have his accounts in the US frozen.

⁴⁷ <https://www.occrg.org/en/the-pegasus-project/trust-no-one-top-kazakh-oligarchs-and-dozens-of-government-officials-may-have-been-spied-on-with-pegasus>

⁴⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/153812584660813/posts/1474934462548612/?d=n>

⁴⁹ Most of the websites involved in this campaign are very similar: structure, blog-based, pseudo-newspaper names, fairly new - <https://bpostnews.be/belgium/the-asylum-of-botagoz-jardemalie-dilemma.html> ; <http://polimedia.press/politics/botagoz-jardemalie-the-worst-eurocrats-nightmare-and-mukhtar-ablyazov-best-ally/> ; <http://luxherald.com/1041-faking-the-opposition-mukhtar-ablyazov-and-the-victimization-game.html> ; <https://london-post.co.uk/mukhtar-ablyazov-and-his-democratic-movement-false-flag-and-distraction-actors/> ; <http://weeklynnewsreview.com/news/politics/viktor-khrapunov-mukhtar-ablyazovs-accomplice-and-a-post-soviet-oligarch-model-organism/>

⁵⁰ <https://www.const-court.be/public/f/2022/2022-001f.pdf>

⁵¹ <https://www.lecho.be/economie-politique/belgique/general/deux-ex-agents-de-la-stasi-condamnes-a-bruxelles/10186717?fbclid=IwAR3tOZ0vmEtFa3cmldW16pvdDkABH5yeetxbit0aZsVMe8erGsK3xmotQi0>

⁵² Decision of the Brussels Appeals Court is available upon request.

Barlyk Mendygazyev is forced to live outside Kazakhstan, so the authorities have fabricated criminal cases against his relatives and against employees of KSS, the company he founded. They have been taken hostage and the investigation is demanding that they testify against Barlyk. Baurzhan Jusupov - held the position of a director of KSS. Natalia Dauletiyarova and Rinat Batkayev are managers of contractor companies that have worked with KSS.



Top row from left to right: Barlyk Mendygazyev, Bekizhan Mendygazyev, Baurzhan Jusupov, Rinat Batkayev, Natalia Dauletiyarova

Bottom row: a protest action of KSS employees against political repression.

On 17 May 2021, Atyrau Court No. 2 sentenced Natalia Dauletiyarova and Baurzhan Jusupov to five years of restriction of liberty, and Dauletiyarova's assistant Rinat Batkayev to 3.5 years of restriction of liberty. They were found guilty of “tax evasion” and/or “issuing false invoices”. They were also charged with “organisation and participation in an organised criminal group” (Article 262 of the Criminal Code), but the court acquitted them of these charges. However, on 26 July 2021, the Atyrau Court of Appeal overturned the decision of the court of the first instance and found Dauletiyarova, Jusupov and Batkayev guilty of “organisation and participation in an organised criminal group” and changed the restriction of liberty to actual imprisonment. Jusupov was sentenced to 5.5 years of imprisonment, Dauletiyarova to seven years of imprisonment and Batkayev to five years of imprisonment.⁵³

The existence of a court ruling on the presence of an “organised criminal group” may be the main basis for fabrication of charges against Barlyk Mendygazyev's brother, Bekizhan Mendygazyev. Bekizhan has been in a pre-trial detention facility since early June 2021.

5. POLITICAL REPRESSION FOLLOWING THE CRACKDOWN ON PROTESTS AND THE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE EVENTS IN KAZAKHSTAN

Political persecution of activists and human rights defenders under the guise of anti-terrorist operations

Despite the authorities’ claims that they are carrying out anti-terrorist operation, there is evidence indicating that persecution is politically motivated.

⁵³ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ActivistsNotExtremists/posts/304769049216880/>

- Human rights defender Raigul Sadyrbayeva was arrested on charges of “participation in riots” for monitoring protests in Semey.
- Human rights defender Aliya Isenova was shot in her arm while monitoring protests and is now in hospital handcuffed to bed because the police reportedly opened a criminal case against her.⁵⁴
- Human rights defender Aiya Sadvakasova was detained for informing international community about human rights violations in Kazakhstan in twitter.⁵⁵ She is being charged with article 274 (“dissemination of deliberately false information”).
- Former political prisoner Aset Abishev was detained on 4 January 2022 by the police and tortured for several days.⁵⁶
- A number of human rights and civil activists were arrested for “violation of the peaceful assembly law” for participation in peaceful protests such as a victim of tortures Daryn Khassenov, activists Berik Nogayev⁵⁷, Amangeldy Muratov⁵⁸, Tanat Reimov and many others.⁵⁹



From left to right: human rights defenders Raigul Sadyrbayeva, Aliya Isenova and Aya Sadvakasova, who have criminal cases initiated against them

This clearly shows that the authorities fight with civil society activists and human rights defenders, but not with mythical 20 thousand international terrorists.

Default incredibility of official investigation findings

The authorities of Kazakhstan are trying to convince the international community that all conclusions should be made only after official investigation is over and findings are presented.⁶⁰ However, findings of official investigation of the authorities are by default invalid and unreliable due to the fact that there is no independent law enforcement and judiciary, as reported by international human rights organisations numerous times.⁶¹

⁵⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ActivistsNotExtremists/posts/3172526996399895/>

⁵⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ActivistsNotExtremists/posts/3173021873017074/>

⁵⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ActivistsNotExtremists/posts/3171559089830019/>

⁵⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ActivistsNotExtremists/posts/3172677723051489/>

⁵⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ActivistsNotExtremists/posts/3171802483139013/>

⁵⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ActivistsNotExtremists/posts/317211649974278/>

⁶⁰ https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/kazakhstan-to-conduct-large-scale-investigation-into-causes-of-mass-riots-122011000063_1.html

⁶¹ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/kazakhstan/freedom-world/2021>

The authorities have made improbable claims about dead bodies of terrorists being stolen by their comrades. Kazakhstan has not conducted a single independent, thorough and transparent investigation of, for example, repressions, political killings.⁶² One of the examples of this is Zhanaozen tragedy of 2011⁶³, when according to the official data, 17 people were killed, and according to unofficial accounts – at least 70 people died. Thirty-seven oil workers were prosecuted on charges of “organizing and participating in mass riots”. Twenty two of them testified in Kazakhstani court about the brutal torture they had to endure, describing these horrible experiences in detail.

The EP resolution of 2019 stated, “whereas impunity for torture and ill-treatment of prisoners and suspects remain the norm, despite the government having committed to zero tolerance for torture; whereas the authorities have failed to conduct a credible investigation into the allegations of torture during the extended oil sector strike in Zhanaozen in 2011”.⁶⁴ Besides, Despite international calls for independent investigation, the authorities have not conducted independent investigation, while a witness of 2011 Zhanaozen events Aleksandr Bozhenko was killed.⁶⁵ Having failed to ensure proper investigation of the Zhanaozen case and feeling impunity, the Kazakhstani authorities continued to commit other crimes and abuse fundamental human rights.

The fact that the authorities shut down the internet and obstructed the work of journalists demonstrates that they intend to promote propaganda.⁶⁶ The authorities have repeatedly declared political reforms, but the human rights situation has only been deteriorating.⁶⁷ Not only will waiting for the results of investigation not clarify the situation, but it will prolong suffering of those who are going through repressions right now hoping that the international community will respond.

International reaction

The international reaction to the protests in Kazakhstan came only after government-controlled criminal groups organised riots, arson and looting. The response from Western countries, in particular the European Union, has been extremely mild, despite the fact that there has been public evidence of political persecution of civil activists and the use of stun grenades, tear gas и water cannons in cold weather against peaceful protesters. The authorities have ignored the EU's call to respect the right to peaceful assembly. This is confirmed by the fact that the authorities have detained some 10,000 people, an overwhelming number of whom are civilians, using brutal force. Some of those detained are known to have received politically motivated administrative arrests for their participation in peaceful protests, while others are subject to politically motivated criminal prosecutions for alleged participation in the mass unrest.

Moreover, the EU has called on the occupiers, who have violated Kazakhstan's sovereignty, to respect Kazakhstan's sovereignty and independence and the fundamental rights of its citizens. However, during the CSTO meeting dated 10 January 2022, dictators Putin, Lukashenko and Tokayev demonstrated in their official speeches that they "have the right to clean up their own house". The Kazakhstani authorities have also ignored the EU's call for respect for media freedom⁶⁸, even though there has been public persecution

⁶² <https://en.odfoundation.eu/a/32928,oppositionist-therefore-extremist/>

⁶³ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-7-2012-0089_EN.html

⁶⁴ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2019-0203_EN.html

⁶⁵ <https://en.odfoundation.eu/a/680,the-aktau-trial-witness-statements-on-torture-and-the-public-reaction-to-the-situation-surrounding-the-judicial-process/>

<https://en.odfoundation.eu/a/995,aleksandr-bozhenkos-case/>

⁶⁶ <https://rsf.org/en/news/rsf-refers-violence-against-reporters-covering-protests-kazakhstan-un>

⁶⁷ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0056_EN.html

<https://en.odfoundation.eu/a/32138,political-killing-in-kazakhstan-list-of-persons-to-be-subjected-to-sanctions-regarding-the-case-of-dulat-agadil/>

<https://twitter.com/netblocks/status/1478694849440358400?lang=en>

<https://netblocks.org/reports/internet-disrupted-in-kazakhstan-amid-energy-price-protests-oy9YQgy3>

⁶⁸ https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/01/08/kazakhstan-declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union-on-the-situation/?utm_source=dsms-

[on](auto&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Kazakhstan%3a+Declaration+by+the+High+Representative+on+behalf+of+the+European+Union+on+the+situati)

of journalists by the police. The EU has ignored Tokayev's illegal order to shoot without warning and continues to ignore the unfolding mass persecution across the country.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

An urgent European Parliament resolution should be passed that contains:

- A demand that the Kazakhstani authorities release all arbitrarily detained activists, political prisoners and stop politically motivated persecution of peaceful protesters, activists, journalists, bloggers, human rights activists;
- The soft response of the democratic governments, the OSCE, the UN allows the regime to unleash even greater political repression and terror against the people of Kazakhstan. To stop the bloodshed, the torture of civilians, personal sanctions should be imposed on Nursultan Nazarbayev and members of his family (Timur Kulibayev, Dariga Nazarbayeva, Kairat Satybaldy, First Deputy of the National Security Committee Samat Abish,), Head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Yerlan Turgumbayev, General Prosecutor Gizat Nurdauletov, Head of the Ministry of Defence Murat Bektanov, Head of Almaty Police Department Kanat Taimerdenov, judge Ruslan Mazhitov, for gross human rights violations and grand corruption.
- A call on the UN and the OSCE to send an international fact-finding mission to Kazakhstan to independently, comprehensively and transparently investigate events in Kazakhstan. Given the experience and lack of an independent justice system, in particular the numerous unfulfilled commitments of the authorities to investigate political killings, the practice of torture, and the mass shootings in Zhanaozen, there is every reason not to trust the competence of a transparent, independent and comprehensive internal investigation into the recent events.

Information on repression (killings, torture, beatings, criminal prosecutions, abductions) received by human rights defenders as of 13 January 2022:

Killings:

1. **Nuraliya Aitkulova** - a civil activist, shot dead on 6 January 2022 in Almaty in the square of the Republic;
2. **Aitbay Aliyev** - civil activist, shot death in Kyzylorda;
3. **Aydar Berikovich Omarov** - shot dead in Almaty;
4. **4-year-old girl killed** during unrest in Almaty on 7 January 2022. "4-year-old girl killed. A teenage girl was injured. They were travelling in a car on Seyfullina Street at the intersection with Satpayeva Street. There were four children and an adult in the car. The car was riddled with bullets. It was on 7 January", said the Children ombudsperson, Aruzhan Sain;
5. The Children ombudsperson Aruzhan Sain reported that a child died from a gunshot wound during the unrest in Almaty. Sain said that parents were walking with their children on a metropolitan street when a shot was fired, which was fatal for the 12-year-old Kazakhstani boy⁶⁹;
6. **Bekenov Almaz** - killed by a shotgun at the entrance to the akimat in Atyrau;
7. **Abubakirov Kozhantai Kozhamuratovich** - killed near the akimat, Almaty, on 5 January 2022;
8. **Tolegenov Bakbergen Azatovich** - killed in Almaty on 5 January 2022;
9. **Bazarbayev Muratkhan Abduly** - died from serious wounds on 6 January 2022 in Almaty;
10. **Bektursyn Margulan Bekmuratuly** - died on 5 January 2022 during protests in the Astana city square;
11. **Murat Abrayev** - killed during protests in Almaty;
12. **Nurgaliyev Kairat** and his friend **Andrey** - died during military shelling on 8 January 2022 in Taldykorgan;
13. **Yelnar Tuimebayev** - born in 1995 - died from gunfire in Almaty;
14. **Nurdauletov Kaiyrzhan** - killed by a shot to the back of the head on 6 January 2022, in Akshiy village;

Wounds, torture:

1. **Manat Zhanatbekovich Alimbayev** - a passerby, was injured with a machine gun. The bullets went straight through. The young man is alive.
2. **Gaziz Fatima Kasymgalyevna** -got her legs burned by a stun grenade during a protest, Aktobe;
3. **Abzal** (surname unknown) - had all his toes torn off by a stun grenade in Aktobe;
4. **Berik Abishev** - got bullet in the head, critical condition, Almaty;
5. **Beken Beysaliyev** - wounded in the hand, Almaty city;
6. **Yermekbaev Azamat Yerbolatovich** - got a rubber bullet in his eye, had an operation, after the operation he was taken to the police, where he was severely beaten, Almaty;

⁶⁹ https://www.instagram.com/p/CYiOCg9oDZx/?utm_medium=copy_link

7. **Daulet Mukhazhanov** - a civil activist, received a gunshot wound to the back of the head, bullet lodged in the spine, both legs paralyzed. Doctors cannot remove the bullet or Daulet will die. He was told that he would be prosecuted despite his paralysed legs;
8. **Bibigul Kokanbekova** - severely beaten and located in Police Department, Semey city;
9. **Aliya Isenova** - a human rights activist, shot in Semey, her arm was crushed. Suffered a surgery. Threatened. Handcuffed to bed;
10. **Aset Abishev** - a former political prisoner and civil activist, was detained in Police Department for 5 days, beaten every day, bruises all over the body, Almaty;
11. **Zhumabekov Nurgeldy** - was shot in the shoulder, 4 January 2022;

Criminal cases:

1. **Anar Kaliyeva** - a civil activist, was detained, beaten. A criminal case under Article 272 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan was initiated; she was placed in pre-trial detention facility for 2 months in Semey;
2. **Aziz Zholatov** - a son of Anar Kaliyeva, 18 years old. He was beaten by ten police officers/NSC officers until he lost consciousness. Aziz's fiancée had a gun to her head. Aziz himself was sent to the pre-trial detention facility in Semey;
3. **Kuat Shamuratov** - a civil activist from Aktobe, was taken to the temporary detention facility, Article 272 Part 1 "organisation of mass disorder", was beaten on the head with a shoulder stock during arrest;
4. **Kairat Sultanbek** - a civil activist, placed in pre-trial detention facility for 2 months, allegedly for intentional destruction or damage to property, hooliganism in a group and resisting a representative of authorities;
5. **Zhanmurat Ashtayev** - a civil activist, beaten, placed in pre-trial detention facility for the duration of investigation for allegedly organising an illegal military formation under Article 267 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan;
6. **Lyazzat Dosmambetova** - a civil activist, criminal case was initiated, placed in pre-trial detention facility for 2 months, Shymkent;
7. **Ruslan Nurkanov** - a civil activist, the restriction of liberty was substituted with an imprisonment for the remaining term of 3 months and 13 days. He served his 5 days of administrative detention which began on 5 January, Ust-Kamenogorsk.
8. **Kanatkhon Amrenov** - a civil activist, sustained multiple injuries during a protest. Almaty.
9. **Almagul Kudaibergenova** - criminal case was initiated, Kokshetau.
10. **Ainur Myrzaliyeva** - a criminal case under Article 274 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan was initiated, Astana.
11. **Muratbai Baimagambetov** - a criminal case under Article 272, Part 2. Now he is in the temporary detention facility, awaiting trial for preventive measures. Probably will be locked up for 2 months in pre-trial detention facility in Kyzylorda;
12. **Bianca Istanbul** - mother of many children, prosecuted under Article 274 Part 2 of the Criminal Code, Astana;
13. **Nuradin Rakai** - prosecuted for participation in a peaceful rally on 4 January 2022 in Taraz;
14. **Nurzhan Sembayev** - a civil activist, a criminal case was initiated, in Police Department his face smashed that it is impossible to recognise him, teeth were knocked out;

15. **Farit Ishmukhametov** - a civil activist, a criminal case was initiated, Semey;
16. **Bibigul Kokanbekova** - a civil activist, a criminal case was initiated, during arrest she was trampled on, kicked in the head, stomach and kidneys. Semey city;
17. **Kenzhebek Sultanbekov** - a criminal case was initiated, Semey;
18. **Tataev Nurlybai** - sent to pre-trial detention facility for 2 months, Lenger;
19. **Darkhan Valiyev** – a civil activist from Almaty. A criminal case under Article 255, Part 4 (“An Act of Terrorism”) was initiated against him. He is faces death penalty now.
20. **Raigul Sadyrbayeva** – is a member of The Human Rights movement Elimay. A criminal case under Article 272 was initiated against her. She was arrested even though she has a disability. Her life is in danger now. Sadyrbayeva faces up to 10 years imprisonment.

Missing persons:

1. **Zakir Askerbek** - a civil activist, went missing, Kyzylorda. At the protest, he was with the murdered Aitbay Aliyev;
2. **Ikramov Yerlan Rakhimovich** - went missing on 6 January 2022. He went to the drugstore to get some medicine, Almaty;
3. **Yeldos Musagaliyev** - went missing in Almaty;
4. **Marat Amantayevich Sadykov** - went missing, Almaty, Kazakhstan;
5. **Kuanysh Ersultan** - went missing, Almaty;
6. **Isyn Minaevich Mukhametaliyev** - missing in action, Almaty;
7. **Yamilova Rufina Albertovna** - went missing on 7 January 2022, Turkestan;
8. **Orynbasarov Nursultan** - went missing 7 January 2022, Almaty;
9. **Zhadiger Sanzhar Zhadigerovich** - went missing, the last time reported that he was in the Police Department, Almaty;
10. **Marat Amantayevich Sadykov** - 15 February 1972 - went missing on 6 January;
11. **Akylbek Sharapiyev** - detained, whereabouts unknown, Semey.
12. **Zhodatkyzy Zhazgul** - went missing, Almaty;
13. **Yerzhan Bekzat Dulatuly** - went missing 5 January 2022, Semey;
14. **Zhanat Duman Zhanatovich** - went missing, 4 January 2022, Almaty;
15. **Nurkasymov Asylkhan Bauyrzhanuly** - reportedly detained, but whereabouts unknown, Almaty;
16. **Khaidarov Yerlan Khaidaruly** - went missing on 6 January 2022, Almaty.