



BRIEFING PAPER FOR EU-KAZAKHSTAN HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUE: KEY ISSUES ON CIVIC SPACE AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

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International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR) is an independent, non-governmental organisation founded in 2008. Based in Brussels, IPHR works closely together with civil society groups from different countries to raise human rights concerns at the international level and promote respect for the rights of vulnerable communities in repressive environments.

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1. Introduction

This briefing has been prepared as input for the EU-Kazakhstan Human Rights Dialogue, scheduled to take place in early March 2025. It provides information about **key issues regarding the protection of civic space and the freedoms of expression, association and assembly** based on ongoing cooperation by International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR) and Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law (KIBHR) in monitoring and documenting developments in these areas in the framework of the CIVICUS Monitor global initiative.¹

The briefing highlights the continued widespread lack of accountability for human rights violations related to the events of January 2022, when authorities harshly suppressed mass protests and ensuing unrest. It also documents how the political modernisation drive initiated by President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev after the January events is undermined by ongoing persecution of government critics and opponents, as well as systematic violations of the freedoms of expression, association and assembly. Additionally, it draws attention to individual cases of civil society activists, opposition supporters, human rights defenders, journalists and bloggers who have been subjected to persecution.

Due to the deterioration in civic freedoms in connection with the January 2022 events, Kazakhstan's country rating was downgraded on the CIVICUS Monitor². Kazakhstan's civic space is currently assessed as "repressed", with a score of 31 on a scale from 0 (worst) to 100 (best).³

During the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Kazakhstan, held in January 2025 under the auspices of the UN Human Rights Council, UN member state delegations raised concerns over ongoing restrictions on the freedoms of expression, association and assembly and called for improvements in these areas.⁴

We urge the EU, during its upcoming dialogue with Kazakhstan, to raise issues covered in this briefing and insist on concrete measures to address violations, including measures to implement recommendations received during the recent UPR.

2. Lack of accountability for human rights violations perpetrated during January 2022 events

During the "Bloody" January 2022 events (hereafter "January events"), peaceful mass protests for social and political change evolved into unrest and clashes between security forces and people in the crowd, resulting in over 230 people killed and several thousand injured.⁵ The authorities have continuously **rejected calls for an international investigation** into these events. At the same time, they have failed to take adequate measures to investigate allegations of the excessive use of force, torture and other serious human rights violations committed by law enforcement and security officials and to bring those responsible to justice.

A report⁶ published by Kazakhstan's Human Rights Alliance in Support of Fundamental Rights – a network of human rights organisations and coalitions, including KIBHR - found that the authorities used

excessive and often unwarranted force during the January events, thereby violating citizens' right to life. While President Tokayev claimed that his "shoot to kill" order issued during these events was targeted at "armed bandits", the NGO research shows that security forces often opened fire indiscriminately without warning.

There are also **widespread allegations of the use of torture and ill-treatment** against people detained during the January events, with six officially reported deaths in custody.⁷ As highlighted in a joint report published by IPHR, KIBHR, Kazakhstan's NGO Coalition against Torture, and the World Organisation against Torture⁸, authorities opened investigations into several hundred complaints received about torture and ill-treatment, but the investigations often did not meet international standards, and many of them were **prematurely closed** due to the alleged lack of elements of crime.

According to figures from the General Prosecutor's Office, as of January 2024, 34 law enforcement and security officials had been convicted on charges relating to torture and other violations committed during the January events.⁹ In the past year, more than a dozen additional convictions have been issued.¹⁰ However, while it is welcome that these officials have been prosecuted and convicted for abuses, the number of such cases still **remains low in relation to the scale of violations** reported during the January events.

Moreover, **fair trial and due process violations** have tainted proceedings against officials charged over abuses related to the January events, and the sentences issued have often **not corresponded to the severity** of the crimes. While more severe penalties sometimes have been issued on appeal¹¹, some officials first imprisoned for torture have later had sentences commuted into fines.¹² The compensation provided to victims of abuse and their families has often been inadequate.¹³

These kinds of concerns have been voiced in relation to the following case – involving distressing accounts of large-scale torture - where a verdict recently was issued:

- On 17 January 2025, a court in the Almaty region convicted six police officers charged with torture and abuse of power during the January 2022 events. It sentenced all of them to three years in prison and ordered them to be deprived of their titles. According to the indictment, during an operation to capture suspected rioters, special police forces detained about **a hundred citizens of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan** on the Almaty-Bishkek highway, taking them to a detention centre in the village of Koshmambet, where they were subjected to brutal torture. Among those detained, 44 people were recognised as victims in the case. The court partially satisfied claims for moral damages filed by several victims.¹⁴

Human rights lawyer Aina Shormanbaeyva, who represented 23 victims in the case, called the sentences **"too lenient" given the scale and nature of the abuses** and said she would appeal. She also expressed concerns about violations of due process and fair trial standards, stating that the trial began before all circumstances had been clarified, all perpetrators had been identified, and all those subjected to torture had been recognised as victims. She also criticised the fact that only some of the victims' requests for moral compensation were granted.¹⁵

The victims in the case include **Vikram Ruzakhunov**, a well-known jazz musician from Kyrgyzstan who was detained despite not taking part in the January 2022 protests. His case attracted

widespread attention when a video was shown on Kazakhstani state TV on 9 January 2022, showing him with visible injuries as he purportedly confessed to being recruited for the unrest in exchange for \$200. Public outcry from his supporters led to his release and return to Kyrgyzstan. Subsequently, Kazakhstani authorities launched an investigation into allegations of torture against him and other detainees, with the trial starting in September 2024.

Ruzakhunov called the verdict “only a small step towards justice” and noted that the trial took place in an intimidating atmosphere, with dozens of police officers gathering outside the court building to express their support for the officers on trial.¹⁶

There are also **concerns about the fairness of legal proceedings** initiated against individuals accused of unlawful actions during the January events. In one such case, 11 defendants were convicted in June 2024 and given prison sentences ranging from one year and nine months to four years over the storming of the presidential residence and the mayor’s office in Almaty.¹⁷ Human rights defenders raised concerns about numerous procedural violations in the case and the lack of substantial evidence to support the charges. Two of those prosecuted, **Nurtas Karaneyev** and **Kosai Makhanbayev**, claimed they were charged after filing complaints about being tortured during the January events and actively seeking justice for their abuse. In October 2024, an appeal court upheld the convictions of defendants, increasing the sentence of one of them to eight years, retaining those of two others unchanged and reducing it by one month for the remaining eight.¹⁸ Shortly after the appeal hearing, Kosai Makhanbayev was released, as his previous time in pre-trial detention and house arrest was credited toward his reduced one-year, eight-month prison sentence.¹⁹

Civil society and opposition activists are also among those convicted over the January 2022 events, on charges considered politically motivated by human rights defenders (see more in chapter 6).

Recommendations

The Kazakhstani authorities should:

- Agree to an international, independent inquiry into the January events to clarify what happened and determine the role and responsibility of different actors.²⁰
- Ensure that all allegations of excessive use of force, torture and other violations related to the January events are investigated in an impartial, transparent, and effective manner, including by re-opening investigations prematurely closed, and that those responsible are brought to justice in fair trials and given penalties commensurate with the severity of their crimes. Victims should be granted adequate compensation.
- Ensure that proceedings against individuals charged with participation in the January events correspond to international standards and clear anyone of charges who has been prosecuted because of the peaceful exercise of fundamental freedoms.

3. Ongoing violations of the freedom of assembly

While particularly serious violations of the right to freedom of assembly were reported during the January 2022 events (see chapter 2), authorities have violated this right on an ongoing basis.

Although hailed as progressive by the government, the new law on organising and conducting peaceful assemblies adopted in Kazakhstan in 2020²¹ **falls short of international human rights standards**. In particular, it formally provides for a notification procedure, but de-facto requires organisers of assemblies to obtain advance permission from local authorities.²² The law only permits assemblies in specially designated venues and does not safeguard the right to hold spontaneous protests.

In the implementation of the new law, authorities have **selectively denied permission** for peaceful protests, especially protests concerning issues perceived to be political in nature. At the same time, they have typically not provided any proper explanations for such decisions or offered any alternative venues.

In a welcome decision issued on 20 January 2025, the Constitutional Court ruled in favor of a complaint filed by human rights defenders, stating that **authorities must not automatically deny permission** for peaceful assemblies – such as on the grounds that other events are already planned at the proposed venues. Instead, authorities must suggest an alternative time or venue of equivalent suitability. Only if organisers reject these proposals can permission be denied.²³ It is important that authorities comply with this ruling in practice and refrain from arbitrarily denying permission for protests.

It is of further concern that peaceful assemblies held without advance permission, as a rule, are dispersed by police, and **participants detained and penalised** by being fined or locked up for up to 15-25 days (under article 488 of the Code on Administrative Offenses). Violations of the rules for organising assemblies are also punishable under the Criminal Code (article 400), although this provision has been rarely applied.

Moreover, in addition to detaining peaceful protesters, authorities regularly carry out **“preventive” detentions** of activists prior to planned protests and **“delayed”** detentions several days, weeks or even months after unsanctioned protests.

Using tactics of the kind described, authorities have, for example, prevented and obstructed peaceful assemblies to demand **justice for victims of the January 2022 events**, to protest against **Russia’s war on Ukraine**, to call for **democratic reforms** and the release of political prisoners, and to draw attention to violations of **women’s rights**.²⁴

Women’s rights activists have repeatedly been denied the right to assemble. Ahead of 8 March 2025, when International Women’s Day will be marked, women activists in Almaty reported receiving a rejection on their request to organise a rally on this day. Local authorities cited the potential threat of violations of public order to justify the rejection.²⁵ Last year, activists were denied the right to march and gather on the same grounds.

In connection with the nationwide referendum on government **plans to build a nuclear power plant (NPP)** in Kazakhstan, held on 6 October 2024, authorities suppressed protests on this issue.

- According to the group “Activists are not extremists,” local authorities in 12 cities across the country issued **a total of 45 rejections** to civil society activists seeking to hold peaceful protests on the NPP issue on referendum day. In most cases, activists submitted several requests to organise protests, but each time their applications were rejected on varying pretexts. These included claims that other events had already been approved for the planned venues, that the venues were undergoing landscaping improvements, or that the activists had allegedly failed to provide sufficient information about themselves.²⁶ Moreover, in the days leading up to the referendum, more than a dozen activists were detained on charges of violating the rules for holding assemblies. Some were fined, while others were sentenced to up to 20 days of detention.²⁷ Another group of activists detained were charged with preparing mass riots (see more on their case in chapter 6).

Even those holding **individual pickets** – a type of protest not regulated by the law on assemblies – have been penalised, such as in this recent case:

- Following the January 2025 arrest of Temirlan Yensebek, a blogger running a satirical news channel on Instagram (see more on his case in chapter 6), several activists were apprehended by police and sentenced to fines or 15 days’ detention for staging one-person pickets in support of him communicating messages such as “Satire is not a crime.”²⁸

Authorities have increasingly interpreted the term “assembly” broadly, also targeting activists because of **informal gatherings** that do not constitute organised protests, such as gatherings to support fellow activists who are on trial behind closed doors, events to commemorate journalist Aidos Sadykov who was killed in Kyiv in July 2024 (see more in chapter 6), and gatherings in connection with the repeated attempts of the opposition party Alga Kazakhstan! to register (see more in chapter 4). Activists have also often been penalised because of social media posts about planned peaceful protests that have not yet taken place.²⁹

Recommendations

The Kazakhstani authorities should:

- In accordance with recommendations received during the recent UPR, bring the law on assemblies into compliance with international standards, including by providing for a simple notification procedure. Such a revision should also be aimed at clearly defining the term “assembly” and protecting the right to hold spontaneous protests.
- Ensure the effective implementation of the Constitutional Court ruling of 20 January 2025 and refrain from automatically denying the right to hold protests.
- Allow peaceful protests to take place without hindrance, and refrain from detaining and penalising citizens for organising, calling for or participating in peaceful assemblies, even if held without pre-approval by authorities.

- End the practices of “preventive” and “delayed” detentions of activists in relation to peaceful protests.
- Stop penalising activists for alleged violations of the rules for holding assemblies because of informal gatherings that do not constitute organised assemblies.

4. Violations of the freedom of association

Harassment of opposition groups

As part of his political modernisation drive initiated after the January 2022 events, President Tokayev pledged to simplify the registration of political parties.³⁰ Relevant legislation was amended to reduce the number of signatures needed for registration, and two new parties were registered before the March 2023 parliamentary elections: Baytak and Respublica. This increased the number of registered parties to seven. However, they are all pro-government, and **no genuine opposition party** has been able to register.

For example, the opposition party Alga Kazakhstan! (“Forward Kazakhstan!”) founded in spring 2022 has repeatedly had its application for registration returned because of alleged problems with the list of supporters provided. Its application has been returned **more than 25 times** on these grounds.³¹

Members of Alga Kazakhstan! and other opposition groups have been subjected to **intimidation and harassment** by authorities on an ongoing basis, including by being held under surveillance, summoned for questioning, detained and penalised when peacefully gathering, and prosecuted and convicted because of their peaceful opposition activities. Among others, the leaders of Alga Kazakhstan! and the Democratic Party – another opposition movement that has had to discontinue its activities due to sustained pressure – have both been convicted on charges which human rights defenders consider politically motivated (see more in chapter 6).

Authorities have also carried out a broad **crackdown on supporters and alleged supporters of the opposition movements** Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DVK) and the Street Party (*Koshe Partiyasy*), both of which have been banned as “extremist” by court despite their non-violent agendas. Those accused of involvement in these groups have faced “extremism” charges because of peaceful civic activities such as participation in protests, dissemination of flyers and social media posts.³² While most of those convicted have received non-custodial sentences, some have been imprisoned.

Restrictions on foreign-funded groups

We remain concerned about measures taken by authorities to **control and stigmatise** civil society organisations (CSOs) receiving funding from abroad.

In accordance with existing legislation, CSOs that receive foreign funding for activities including legal assistance, surveys, as well as data collection, analysis and dissemination are subjected to **a separate, discriminatory reporting scheme**. Under this scheme, they are required to provide information about their funding for inclusion in a government database.

CSOs have also been subjected to pressure in relation to the reporting scheme for foreign funding. In the lead-up to the January 2021 parliamentary elections, KIBHR and over a dozen other Kazakhstani human rights, media, and election monitoring organisations were targeted by tax authorities, facing the threat of heavy fines and suspension of their activities for alleged minor technical reporting violations (under Article 460-1 of the Code on Administrative Offenses).³³ Following domestic and international protests, the charges were eventually dropped. However, the risk persists that alleged reporting **violations related to foreign funding may be used as a pretext** to put pressure on CSOs.

Further, in September 2023, **a list of legal entities and individuals receiving foreign funding** was published on the website of the Ministry of Finance's State Revenue Committee.³⁴ The 240 entries on the list include KIBHR and many other well-known human rights organisations and human rights defenders. In a joint statement, IPHR and eight other international human rights NGOs criticised the publication of the list, saying it "serves no other purpose except to **stigmatise, discredit and discriminate**" against those included on it.³⁵

In February 2025, as the Trump administration moved to dismantle the US Agency for International Development (USAID), **hostile rhetoric about foreign-funded NGOs** resurfaced in Kazakhstan, with policy makers seizing the moment to **propose restrictive measures**.

Citing a White House press release that accused USAID of supporting "malicious" projects³⁶, Member of Parliament Magerram Magerramov urged the government to conduct a thorough review of foreign-funded projects in the country. He **specifically targeted projects promoting LGBTI rights**, claiming they promote "an ideology alien to us, imposed under the guise of human rights." He also called for legislation to protect children from so-called "malicious" foreign-funded projects.³⁷ In addition, anti-liberal, pro-Russian commentators used the attention surrounding USAID to attack foreign-funded NGOs, seeking to discredit and intimidate them.³⁸ These attacks ignored the fact that USAID has provided significant financial assistance to the Kazakhstani government, e.g. for initiatives related to healthcare and innovative technologies, in addition to supporting civil society projects.³⁹

Moreover, with reference to the Trump administration's actions on foreign assistance, Member of Parliament Irina Smirnova stated on 12 February 2025 that it is time to reassess the status of NGOs and "rewrite the rules of the game with foreign donors who disguise political interests as 'media support,' 'human rights,' and 'increasing tolerance'". To this end, she proposed **introducing a foreign agent NGO law** in the country.⁴⁰ Similar Russia-inspired legislation was adopted in neighboring Kyrgyzstan last year, fostering a climate of fear and self-censorship among NGOs.⁴¹ In Russia, authorities have used "foreign agent" legislation for over a decade to systematically discredit, harass, and silence NGOs.

The recent developments are highly worrying, raising concerns that new repressive legislation and other moves targeting foreign-funded NGOs might follow. These fears are further heightened by reports indicating that Kazakhstan and Russia have agreed to set up regular information exchange on countering "the influence of foreign agents".⁴²

Harassment of LGBTI groups⁴³

Authorities have also **restricted the freedom of association of LGBTI groups**. For example, the LGBTI feminist movement **Feminita** has repeatedly been denied registration with the Ministry of Justice on spurious grounds since 2017. The movement has also faced other harassment. In a recent case, it struggled to secure a venue for a meeting in Almaty in October 2024, with multiple hotels declining due to alleged pressure from the local mayor's office.⁴⁴ During the meeting, members of Kazakhstan Parents' Union disrupted the event and filmed participants, prompting Feminita to call the police. Upon arrival, police detained Feminita's co-founder, **Gulzada Serzhan**, and two representatives from Kazakhstan Parents' Union, while other attendees were prevented from leaving as police photographed their IDs.⁴⁵ Later that day, a member of parliament called for Feminita to be declared "extremist" and banned, further escalating the group's ongoing challenges.⁴⁶

Recommendations

The Kazakhstani authorities should:

- Allow opposition parties to register and carry out their activities without undue obstruction and hindrance, and stop intimidating and harassing opposition activists for their peaceful engagement.
- Refrain from undue control, discrimination and stigmatisation of foreign-funded CSOs, and ensure that any oversight of such organisations is implemented in full accordance with Kazakhstan's international obligations. They should refrain from adopting "foreign agent" NGO legislation and abolish the public list of foreign-funded entities as well as the separate reporting scheme for such groups.
- Ensure that LGBTI groups can exercise their freedom of association unhindered, investigate any incidents of harassment targeting them and their members, and hold those responsible to account.

5. Violations of the freedom of expression

Concerns about new media law

After being passed by the two houses of parliament, a new media law was signed by the president on 19 June 2024. It entered into force in August 2024.⁴⁷

Both representatives of the media community and international experts have **raised concerns** about the new media law. An expert analysis of the draft law by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, published in October 2023⁴⁸, welcomed some provisions, such as a definition and ban on censorship, shortened deadlines for state bodies to respond to requests for information from media and journalists, and the establishment of a statute of limitations for defamation lawsuits relating to journalistic materials. However, the OSCE experts criticised other aspects of the draft law, such as the lack of clear definitions of key concepts, vaguely worded restrictions on media content, the failure to

adequately account for the differences between different types of media outlets in the regulation of media operations, and the lack of sufficient guarantees against arbitrary decisions to restrict or suspend the activities of media.

In addition, prior to the adoption of the law, new problematic provisions were added. These included a requirement not only for offline but also online media to undergo compulsory state registration, and provisions granting the government new powers to deny accreditation to foreign media outlets and their reporters. The introduction of these provisions coincided with difficulties faced by over 30 correspondents from Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's (RFE/RL's) local service, Radio *Azattyq* in obtaining accreditation.⁴⁹ While the service eventually reached an agreement with the Foreign Ministry on the accreditation of its journalists⁵⁰, there are concerns that new similar cases might occur.

New accreditation rules for foreign media and journalists introduced by the government in follow-up to the media law reinforced concerns. Under these rules, accreditation could be denied, suspended, or withdrawn for unspecified violations of national law.⁵¹ In addition, the government adopted new accreditation rules for domestic journalists covering the work of state bodies.⁵² These rules require journalists to publish information received from state bodies exclusively in the media outlet for which they were accredited with these bodies, even if they work for multiple outlets. Journalists who fail to comply could have their accreditation suspended for up to six months. The same could happen if they are found to violate the code of conduct at state press events or access rules for state buildings.

Media watchdogs have **severely criticised the new accreditation rules**, warning that they could result in censorship.⁵³ Nine journalists filed a lawsuit against the Ministry of Culture and Information, arguing that the domestic accreditation rules violate their constitutionally protected rights to freedom of expression and dissemination of information.⁵⁴ However, on 11 November 2024, an Astana court dismissed the lawsuit, finding no violation of these rights, a decision that was upheld on appeal.⁵⁵

Shortly after the new domestic accreditation rules took effect, journalist Zhania Urankaeva was barred from entering the Cabinet of Ministers building for allegedly violating access rules. The ban related to an incident where she left the building's press centre to pose questions to two ministers. It was only lifted following a public outcry⁵⁶, with Kazakhstan's Union of Journalists condemning it as "unacceptable".⁵⁷

Misuse of broadly worded laws used to suppress freedom of expression

We are concerned about the misuse of broadly worded legislation to suppress the right to freedom of expression.

Article 274 of the Criminal Code, which penalises knowingly spreading "false" information, as well as article 174, which prohibits "incitement" to national, ethnic, social and other discord have both been frequently been **misused against government critics** (for examples, see chapter 6). Human rights groups and international experts have repeatedly criticised these provisions, and during the UPR in January 2025, several UN member states urged Kazakhstan to repeal or revise them to ensure compliance with international human rights standards.⁵⁸ Despite these calls, in early February 2024, Minister of Culture and Information, Aida Balayeva proposed **further strengthening penalties** under article 174.⁵⁹

Additionally, a new provision introduced to the Code on Administrative Offences in 2023 (article 456-2) penalises the publication and dissemination of “false” information, whether intentional or not, with fines and short-term detention. Since its adoption, it has repeatedly been used **to penalise legitimate free speech**. For example, Radio *Azattyq* has been fined twice under the provision. In November 2023, it was fined around 200 EUR over an article stating that the Collective Security Treaty Organisation is “led” by Russia.⁶⁰ A year later, it was fined approximately 340 EUR because of a video report containing a translation mistake: the Kazakh-language report referred to a prosecutor request for an eight-year sentence for a journalist, while the Russian-language article on which this statement was based said that such a sentence “threatened” the journalist. Radio *Azattyq* admitted the mistake and offered to correct it, stressing that there had been no intention to publish “false” information. The court nevertheless convicted the service.⁶¹

While the separate offense of disseminating “slanderous” information was decriminalised in 2020, it remains punishable by fines and short-term detention under article 73-3 of the Code on Administrative Offences. The implementation of this provision has continued to give rise to free speech concerns.⁶²

Campaign against “LGBTI propaganda”⁶³

During the consideration of the draft media law (see above), MPs from the ruling Amanat party proposed controversial provisions, which would have established criminal responsibility for propaganda of so-called non-traditional sexual relations and allowed for suspending the operations of media outlets on that ground.⁶⁴ These provisions were eventually not approved. However, the new media law grants the Ministry of Information powers to monitor mass media to detect possible violations of “national, cultural and family values” as well as “harm to the moral development of society”, which gives rise to concerns that authorities might seek to curtail freedom of expression under the guise of preserving traditional values.

There have also been other concerning developments in this regard. For example, in February 2024, the government **blocked a website** aimed at informing young people about LGBTI issues, citing the protection of national traditions and children’s rights as justification for the move.⁶⁵ There have also been reports of police intimidation and harassment of individuals accused of promoting “LGBTI propaganda”.⁶⁶

Moreover, in June 2024, the government announced that **a public petition to ban “LGBTI propaganda”** had gathered enough signatures for it to be officially considered.⁶⁷ During the discussions in a working group set up for this purpose, supporters of the petition claimed that “LGBTI propaganda” and even LGBTI relations as such are due to Western influence, threaten national values and security, and lead to child abuse.⁶⁸ Human rights defenders and international experts severely criticised the initiative, with a group of UN experts stressing that it is “based on prejudice” and “any legislation arising from it would inevitably and unlawfully trample on human rights” in violation of Kazakhstan’s international obligations.⁶⁹ Following the discussions, the government decided to **partially support** the petition and ordered a study into the alleged influence of LGBTI materials on children.⁷⁰ While this study is currently under way, concerns remain that restrictive legislation could be elaborated in this area.

In January 2025, Member of Parliament Edil Zhanbyrshin called on the government to **fully implement the demands of the previous petition** to ban “LGBTI propaganda” and to introduce legislation regulating social media on this issue. In his statement, he referenced a recent executive order signed by US President Trump, which declared that the US government would recognize only two sexes—male and female.⁷¹ He argued that this undermined the position of officials who had opposed a ban on “LGBTI propaganda,” citing concerns from Western officials about restrictions on democracy and human rights.⁷²

Stifling dissent ahead of NPP referendum

On 6 October 2024, a nationwide referendum was held on controversial plans to construct a nuclear power plant (NPP) in Kazakhstan. According to the official results, 71 percent of voters supported building a NPP near Lake Balkash in the Almaty region⁷³. While the government has argued that the NPP will ensure clean, affordable energy and help maintain low electricity tariffs, opponents have raised concerns about both environmental and national security risks, with Russia's state-owned Rosatom among the top bidders to build the plant.⁷⁴ Independent observers reported irregularities during the referendum, including the use of “carousel voting” and ballot stuffing, and the ungrounded removal of observers from polling stations.⁷⁵

In addition, as with all elections in the country, the referendum took place in a tightly controlled political environment, in which authorities **stifled public discussion and expressions of dissent on the NPP issue**. In August 2024, Minister of Energy Almassadam Satkaliyev condemned opposition to the NPP plans as “unpatriotic” and announced that his department was submitting a complaint to the police against critics on this issue.⁷⁶ Critics were also directly targeted, including by being prevented from attending public debates on the NPP, and penalised for publishing videos critical of the construction of it.⁷⁷ Authorities also denied permission for peaceful protests planned across the country on the day of the referendum and detained activists beforehand to prevent demonstrations (see more in chapter 3). Some activists opposing the NPP faced criminal charges on accusation of preparing mass riots in connection with the referendum (see chapter 6).

Recommendations

The Kazakhstani authorities should:

- Ensure that the implementation of the new media law does not result in violations of the freedoms of media and expression, and bring the law in line with international standards.
- Ensure that new accreditation rules for foreign media and journalists, as well as domestic journalists covering the work of state bodies, are not implemented to unduly obstruct the work of media outlets and journalists.
- Repeal or thoroughly revise broadly worded articles of the criminal and administrative codes that prohibit the dissemination of “false” information, “incitement to discord” and “slander” to prevent application restricting legitimate free speech. Do not impose stiffer penalties for such offenses under the provisions currently in force.

- Refrain from any initiatives that unduly curtail freedom of expression or other fundamental rights under the pretext of protecting traditional values, including by elaborating legislation and taking other steps to curb “LGBTI propaganda”.
- Refrain from suppressing open debate and exchange on issues of public interest, such as the NPP issue.

6. Persecution of activists, journalists, and bloggers

Civil society activists, opposition supporters, human rights defenders, journalists, and bloggers who are critical of the authorities face **ongoing intimidation and harassment**, ranging from online threats to arrest and prosecution on politically motivated charges.

More than two dozen activists were charged with rioting (under Criminal Code article 272) and other offences relating to **the January 2022 events** despite the lack of evidence of their involvement in any unlawful acts.⁷⁸ The investigations and legal proceedings against activists charged in relation to the January events were marred by allegations of procedural violations and several activists reported being subjected to torture and ill-treatment in detention.⁷⁹ Some of the criminal cases initiated in this context were eventually closed, and some activists were amnestied and freed from penalty. However, other activists are currently serving sentences issued against them.

Activists, journalists and bloggers have also faced criminal charges unrelated to the January events in retaliation for their legitimate exercise of the freedoms of expression, association and assembly. These charges have often been initiated under **broadly worded Criminal Code provisions**, such as those prohibiting the deliberate spread of “false” information (article 274), incitement to national, ethnic, social or other discord (article 174), or extremism (in particular, article 405 which penalises the involvement in banned, extremist groups). The trials against activists have been characterised by due process and fair trial violations.

More than 20 people are currently behind bars on charges considered politically motivated by Kazakhstani human rights defenders.⁸⁰

Below we describe a few recent cases involving the prosecution of activists and journalists which are of concern to us (note that this is not an exhaustive list).

Cases related to the January 2022 events

- In April 2023, **Zhanbolat Mamai**, leader of the opposition Democratic Party, was found guilty of organising mass riots and spreading false information and given a suspended six-year prison sentence. His sentence could become real if he is found to violate probation. The charges against him, related to the January 2022 events, lack credible basis and were clearly initiated to penalise him for his opposition activities and criticism of the authorities. Although not imprisoned, Mamai faces wide-ranging prohibitions on political and social activities, which prevents him from continuing his opposition campaigning.⁸¹

- In July 2023, civil society activists **Aigerim Tleuzhan** and **Kalas Nurpeisov** were sentenced to four and eight years in prison, respectively, for their alleged involvement in the seizure of Almaty airport during the January 2022 events. The prosecution's case relied heavily on questionable witness testimonies, and evidence supporting the activists' innocence was largely ignored. Human rights defenders have called for their immediate release, considering the trial flawed and politically motivated.⁸²
- Human rights activist **Raigul Sadyrbayeva** was detained in mid-January 2022 and charged with participating in mass riots and attacking public property during the protests earlier that month. She reported being tortured and ill-treated during her two months in pre-trial detention and faced restrictions on contact with her lawyer and family. She was moved to house arrest in March 2022 before eventually being cleared of charges in December 2022. However, concerns remain that no one has been held accountable for her alleged mistreatment.⁸³

Cases against opposition activists

- In November 2023, the leader of the Alga Kazakhstan! opposition movement, **Marat Zhylyanbaev** was convicted of extremism-related charges and sentenced to seven years in prison, with an additional three-year ban on public and political engagement.⁸⁴ The charges concerned his alleged connections with the banned DVK opposition movement (see chapter 4) and bank transfers to co-activists with alleged DVK links to support their participation in elections. Case materials indicated that the charges lacked substance and were initiated to punish him for his legitimate exercise of freedoms of expression, association, and assembly. Despite this, Zhylyanbaev's appeal was rejected by the Supreme Court in June 2024 following a closed hearing.⁸⁵ He has reported being subjected to pressure in prison.⁸⁶ IPHR, KIBHR and other human rights organisations have called for Zhylyanbaev's immediate and unconditional release.⁸⁷
- **Aidar Syzdykov**, Alga Kazakhstan! co-founder and Marat Zhykanbaev's close associate, was sentenced to five years in prison in September 2024 following an unfair trial.⁸⁸ He was convicted of spurious charges of unlawful distribution of drugs, based on the testimony of an undisclosed witness claiming to have transferred 10,000 tenge (some 10 EUR) to Syzdykov's bank account as payment for drugs. However, the activist's account was frozen following his earlier conviction in 2021 for participation in the banned opposition movements DVK and *Koshe Partiyasy* (see chapter 4). At that time, he received a three-year, non-custodial so-called restriction of freedom sentence. Human rights defenders considered the new charges part of a long-term campaign of harassment, in which Syzdykov has repeatedly been sentenced to short-term detention for peaceful protests.⁸⁹
- In August 2024, **Duman Mukhamedkarim** - a journalist, blogger and opposition activist known for criticising authorities - was sentenced to seven years in prison on charges of participating in the activities of a banned extremist organisation and financing extremist activities. The trial was held behind closed doors.⁹⁰ The charges against him concern a live broadcast he aired in December 2022 together with the founder of the banned DVK opposition movement (see chapter 4). He allegedly published information about how to make donations to the DVK and expressed

support for its programme. Mukhamedkarim reported being subjected to ill-treatment in pre-trial detention, with an investigation opened into these allegations failing to produce any concrete results. In December 2024, Mukhamedkarim's lawyer reported that his client had injured himself twice in protest over being denied transfer to a penal colony following his conviction and facing harsh conditions in solitary confinement.⁹¹ Prior to his prosecution on criminal charges, Mukhamedkarim was repeatedly sentenced to short-term detention for attempting to hold peaceful unsanctioned protests. Human rights defenders have recognised him as a political prisoner and called for his release.⁹²

- Following another closed trial, in August 2024, the same court that heard the case against Mukhamedkarim sentenced activist **Asylbek Zhamuratov** to seven years in prison on similar charges of financing and participating in extremist activities.⁹³ According to human rights defenders monitoring the case, the charges relied on Zhamuratov's creation of a WhatsApp group to discuss politically motivated persecution, whose members included DVK founder Mukhtar Abyazov, and his dissemination of DVK materials. In addition, he was accused of financing extremism because of the provision of assistance to relatives of imprisoned co-activists. Zhamuratov's wife reported being subjected to pressure when speaking out about her husband's case, including threats of criminal prosecution.⁹⁴

Cases involving charges of "inciting" discord

- On 17 January 2025, **Temirlan Yensebek**, a blogger who runs the satirical Instagram channel Qaznews24, was detained following a search of his Almaty home. He was charged with inciting inter-ethnic discord, and a local court sanctioned his pre-trial detention for two months. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in prison.⁹⁵

Later the Almaty police department stated that the blogger had posted material containing "clear signs of incitement to inter-ethnic discord," allegedly insulting an ethnic group. While it did not specify which posts were the basis for the charges, it confirmed that a song shared by Yensebek was under investigation.⁹⁶ This is believed to be "*Yo, orystar*" ("*Yo, Russians*")—containing offensive lyrics about Russians—which was featured in a January 2024 post on Qaznews24 about Tina Kanderlak, a pro-government media personality in Russia. Yensebek's post was a reaction to Kanderlak's claims that the Russian language was being "displaced" in Kazakhstan.⁹⁷

Human rights defenders have raised concerns that Yensebek is being prosecuted merely for sharing the controversial song, which he did not write and which is not banned in Kazakhstan.⁹⁸ Moreover, thousands of other social media users have shared it without facing charges. Originally released much earlier, the song regained popularity on social media in Kazakhstan following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Yensebek's supporters believe that the authorities are using the song as a pretext to target Yensebek for his satirical posts on domestic events and government actions.⁹⁹ The blogger's lawyer reported unlawful attempts to access her client's phone and computer, as well as a search for additional devices in his cell, reinforcing concerns that he is being targeted for his blogging activities rather than just the song.¹⁰⁰

Yensebek was previously subjected to a criminal investigation in 2021 for allegedly knowingly disseminating false information. Police then claimed that his satirical posts “misinformed” and “misled” citizens, but the case was ultimately closed.¹⁰¹

- In June 2023, civil society activist **Timur Danebaev** was sentenced to three years in prison for “inciting national discord” because of social media streams critical of government policies and Russian aggression against Ukraine. In September 2023, a leaked video showed prison officials torturing Danebaev and co-prisoners, leading to the dismissal of over 10 officials and the launch of a criminal investigation into the allegations of torture. Danebaev has been recognised as a political prisoner by human rights defenders.¹⁰²

Case against women’s rights activist

- Women’s rights activist **Dinara Smailova** is facing multiple criminal charges related to her efforts to assist victims of domestic and sexual violence and ensure accountability for perpetrators. She has been accused of using money donated to her organisation, *Ne Molchi*, for personal needs and disseminating “false” information on social media. Having fled Kazakhstan in 2021, Smailova was declared internationally wanted in December 2023 and *Ne Molchi*’s accounts were frozen.¹⁰³ Later Kazakhstan requested her extradition from a European country.¹⁰⁴ In addition to human rights groups, the UN special rapporteur on human rights defenders and several other UN experts have raised concerns about the apparent retaliatory nature of the charges against her as well as due process violations in the case.¹⁰⁵

NPP referendum related case

- On 29 September 2024, **12 activists opposing the construction of a NPP** were detained in Almaty and Almaty region. Five of them were subsequently placed in pre-trial detention and the rest released with a travel ban on charges of attempting to prepare mass riots. Fellow activists deemed the case politically motivated and related to the activists’ engagement against the NPP and their plans to organise protests on this issue. According to the lawyer of some of those charged in the case, the activists’ exchanges were recorded when they gathered to discuss the NPP issue.¹⁰⁶ At the time of writing, the investigation in the case is still under way, and in late January 2025, the pre-trial detention of the five activists was again extended.¹⁰⁷ In December 2024, human rights defenders raised concerns about a serious deterioration in the health of one of the activists held in pre-trial detention, **Aidar Mubatakov**, due to an extended hunger strike held in protest against his prosecution.¹⁰⁸ He eventually ended the hunger strike.

Karakalpkastan activists facing the threat of extradition

- Activists from Uzbekistan’s autonomous Karakalpkastan republic, residing in Kazakhstan, face the threat of forcible return to Uzbekistan, where they risk torture and politically motivated imprisonment for their peaceful activism. Three activists, **Akylbek Muratbai**, **Rasul Zhumaniyazov**, and **Rinat Utambetov** were arrested in February-April 2024 charges initiated against them by Uzbekistani authorities in relation to the July 2022 mass protests against proposed constitutional

amendments in Karakalpakstan, which were forcefully put down by security forces.¹⁰⁹ As of early February 2025, Muratbai and Zhumaniyazov remained in detention in Kazakhstan. Utambetov was reported to have been extradited to Uzbekistan after withdrawing his asylum request in Kazakhstan and agreeing to return.¹¹⁰ He was later transferred to a detention facility in Nukus, where he remains pending further investigation into the charges against him.¹¹¹

Several other Karakalpak activists were arrested in autumn 2022 and held for a year before being released.¹¹² While they were not extradited to Uzbekistan, neither were they granted asylum in Kazakhstan, leaving them at the risk of refoulement to Uzbekistan.

Death of journalist

- Opposition journalist **Aidos Sadykov** died on 2 July 2024 due to the injuries he sustained during an assassination attempt in Kyiv two weeks earlier.¹¹³ Sadykov vocally criticised the Kazakhstani authorities, including on a popular YouTube channel,¹¹⁴ which he co-founded with his journalist wife after they fled Kazakhstan in 2014 and sought refuge in Ukraine. The couple continued to face intimidation and harassment after leaving Kazakhstan. In autumn 2023, Kazakhstani authorities declared them internationally wanted on charges of “inciting discord”, initiated on unclear grounds.¹¹⁵ Following the attack on Sadykov, Ukrainian authorities identified two Kazakhstani citizens as suspects and requested their extradition.¹¹⁶ One of them was detained in Kazakhstan, while the whereabouts of the other are unknown.

Recommendations

The Kazakhstani authorities should:

- Stop arresting, prosecuting and convicting activists, human rights defenders, journalists and bloggers in retaliation for their peaceful and legitimate exercise of fundamental freedoms; clear those prosecuted on such grounds of charges and immediately and unconditionally release them, if they are currently behind bars.
- Protect the health and well-being of activists in detention. Promptly, thoroughly, and impartially investigate any allegations of abusive treatment and hold the perpetrators accountable.
- In accordance with recommendations received during the recent UPR, repeal or revise the Criminal Code provisions on “inciting discord” (article 174), “knowingly spreading false information” (article 274), and involvement in “extremist” activities (article 405 and others) to bring them into line with international standards and ensure that these provisions are not used to penalise activists for their peaceful exercise of fundamental freedoms.
- Refrain from extraditing any Karakalpak activists to Uzbekistan in violation of the non-refoulement ban set out by international law.
- Cooperate constructively with the investigation in Aidos Sadykov’s case with a view to ensuring justice for his killing.

¹ See <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/kazakhstan/>

² See press release issued on 20 June 2022: <https://iphronline.org/articles/kazakhstan-downgraded-by-civicus-monitor-as-civic-freedoms-deteriorate/>

³ See <https://monitor.civicus.org/>

⁴ See the outcome report from the UPR: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/kz-index>

⁵ See more in IPHR-KIBHR special update on the January events: <https://www.iphronline.org/kazakhstan-widespread-violations-reported-during-bloody-january.html>

⁶ The report is available at https://bureau.kz/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/ru_final.pdf

⁷ In August 2022, the authorities finally released an official list of people who died during the January events, including six who died in police detention. See more in the following media article: <https://www.rferl.org/a/kazakhstan-unrest-death-toll-238/31991206.html?lflags=mailer>

⁸ Available at <https://www.iphronline.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Kazakhstan-January-Report-ENG.pdf>

⁹ See the following media report for more information about figures provided by the General prosecutor's Office: <https://vlast.kz/novosti/58280-v-sudy-napravleny-dela-po-anvarskim-sobytiyam-v-otnosenii-13-sotrudnikov-knb-i-29-policejskih.html>

¹⁰ For more information, see IPHR-KIBHR reports prepared in cooperation with the CIVICUS Monitor: [https://iphronline.org/countries/kazakhstan/?mark\[\]=civicus-monitor](https://iphronline.org/countries/kazakhstan/?mark[]=civicus-monitor)

¹¹ For more information, see IPHR-KIBHR reports prepared in cooperation with the CIVICUS Monitor: [https://iphronline.org/countries/kazakhstan/?mark\[\]=civicus-monitor](https://iphronline.org/countries/kazakhstan/?mark[]=civicus-monitor)

¹² See more in joint statement issued by IPHR, the Coalition against Torture in Kazakhstan and other partners on International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, 26 June 2024: <https://iphronline.org/articles/human-rights-groups-call-for-action-to-end-torture-in-central-asia/>

¹³ See more in the following IPHR-KIBHR report from October 2024: https://iphronline.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/kazakhstan-victims-report_oct-24.pdf

¹⁴ See more in Radio Azattyk article from 17 January 2025: <https://rus.azattyk.org/a/v-kazahstane-politseyskih-osudili-na-3-goda-za-primenenii-v-yanvare-2022-go-pytok-k-zaderzhannym-v-chisle-kotoryh---muzykant-iz-kr-ruzahunov/33279291.html>

¹⁵ She made these comments in an interview with Radio Azattyk: <https://rus.azattyk.org/a/v-kazahstane-politseyskih-osudili-na-3-goda-za-primenenii-v-yanvare-2022-go-pytok-k-zaderzhannym-v-chisle-kotoryh---muzykant-iz-kr-ruzahunov/33279291.html>

¹⁶ See Kaktus.media article from 17 January 2025: https://kaktus.media/doc/516403_delo_o_pytkah_vikrama_ryzahynova_kazahskim_policeyskim_vynesli_prigovor.html

¹⁷ <https://respublika.kz.media/archives/125822>

¹⁸ <https://respublika.kz.media/archives/132096>

¹⁹ <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/33161860.html>

²⁰ See also joint call by IPHR and other NGOs on this issue: <https://www.iphronline.org/civil-society-groups-call-on-kazakhstan-to-establish-a-fully-independent-investigation-into-the-january-2022-events.html>

²¹ The new law entered into force 10 days after its official publication on 26 May 2020. It is available in Russian at: https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=36271780&show_di=1

²² For more information, see comments by KIBHR Director Yevgeniy Zhovtis in the following interview: <https://bureau.kz/novosti/v-kazahstane-net-politicheskih/>

²³ https://bureau.kz/publ-all/sobstvennaya_informaciya/akimaty-ne-smogut-zapreshhat/

²⁴ For examples of violations related to peaceful protests on these and other issues, please refer to the following IPHR-KIBHR briefing papers: <https://iphronline.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/briefing-paper-for-eu-kazakhstan-hr-dialogue-april-2024.pdf>, <https://www.iphronline.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/IPHR-KIBHR-briefing-paper-for-EU-Kazakhstan-HR-dialogue-2023.pdf>, and regular IPHR-KIBHR updates on civic space issues prepared in cooperation with the CIVICUS Monitor: [https://iphronline.org/countries/kazakhstan/?mark\[\]=civicus-monitor](https://iphronline.org/countries/kazakhstan/?mark[]=civicus-monitor)

²⁵ <https://vlast.kz/novosti/63474-vlasti-almaty-snova-otkazali-feministkam-v-provedenii-mitinga-8-marta.html>

²⁶ <https://bureau.kz/goryachee/mirnyj-atom-ne-terpit-svobody-mirnyh-sobranij/>

²⁷ See Facebook post by Bakhytzhana Toreghozhina: https://www.facebook.com/toregozhina/posts/8717174274961747?ref=embed_post

²⁸ For an overview of such cases, see: <https://bureau.kz/novosti/satira-ne-prestuplenie/>, <https://vlast.kz/novosti/63564-sud-ostrofoval-ese-odnu-aktivistku-za-odinocnyj-piket-v-almaty.html#:~:text=%D0%92%20%D1%87%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B3%20%D1%81%D1%83%D0%B4%20%D0%B2%20%D0%90%D0%BB%D0%BC%D0%B0%D1%82%D1%8B,%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%BD%D1%8B%D1%85%20%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%B4%20%D0%B0%D0%B4%D0%BC%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%B2%D0%BD%D1%8B%D0%B9%20%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%B5%D1%81%D1%82%20%D1%81%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B2>

²⁹ For examples from the past year, see IPHR-KIBHR updates published in December 2024 and June 2024, respectively: <https://iphronline.org/articles/kazakhstan-crackdown-on-dissent-over-nuclear-power-plant-controversial-media-accreditation->

rules-and-anti-lgbtqi-propaganda-measures/, <https://iphronline.org/articles/kazakhstan-flood-coverage-restrictions-womens-rights-rally-ban-and-legal-cases-against-activists/>

³⁰ The president made this pledge in an address to the people of Kazakhstan, delivered in March 2022:

<https://akorda.kz/ru/poslanie-glavy-gosudarstva-kasym-zhomarta-tokaeva-narodu-kazahstana-1623953>

³¹ See more in IPHR-KIBHR update from June 2024: <https://iphronline.org/articles/kazakhstan-flood-coverage-restrictions-womens-rights-rally-ban-and-legal-cases-against-activists/>

³² One example is a case involving 13 activists, who were convicted of involvement in banned extremist organisations in 2021 because of actions of peaceful expression and protest such as organising rallies, wearing t-shirts with slogans, disseminating flyers and posting social media appeals. See more in the following KIBHR statement: <https://bureau.kz/goryachee/zayavlenie-o-presledovaniyah-po-politicheskim-motivam/>

³³ See more in the following joint statements issued by IPHR and partners: <https://www.iphronline.org/kazakhstan-end-campaign-against-human-rights-ngos-joint-civil-society-appeal.html>; <https://www.iphronline.org/kazakhstan-tax-officials-should-end-harassment-withdraw-their-notice.html>

³⁴ The list is available at: <https://kgd.gov.kz/ru/content/reestr-lic-poluchayushchih-dengi-i-ili-inoe-imushchestvo-ot-inostrannyh-gosudarstv>

³⁵ The joint statement is available at: <https://www.iphronline.org/kazakhstan-abolish-the-foreign-funding-register.html>

³⁶ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/uncategorized/2025/02/at-usaid-waste-and-abuse-runs-deep/>

³⁷ https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/kazahstanskiy-deputat-zachital-emotsionalnoe-obraschenie-iz-561657/

³⁸ <https://t.me/eurobri/3522>

³⁹ For more information, see the following articles: <https://orda.kz/kak-usaid-pokupalo-tehniku-pravitelstvu-kazahstana-i-kto-esche-ostanetsja-bez-amerikanskih-grantov-397785/>, <https://en.orda.kz/trump-suspends-usaid-operations-how-does-this-affect-kazakhstan-4960/>

⁴⁰ <https://www.zakon.kz/obshestvo/6466831-vvesti-v-kazahstane-zakon-ob-inostrannykh-agentakh-predlozili-deputaty.html>, https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/deputat-predlozila-prinyat-v-kazahstane-zakon-ob-inoagentah-562299/

⁴¹ <https://iphronline.org/articles/eu-ensuring-a-value-based-partnership-with-kyrgyzstan-civic-space-briefing/>

⁴² See more in Eurasianet article from 7 June 2024: <https://eurasianet.org/russian-and-kazakh-legislators-set-up-information-exchange-to-study-foreign-influence>

⁴³ For more information on issues related to LGBT rights, see IPHR report *A worrying shift: Central Asian governments move to further curtail LGBT rights*, published in November 2024: <https://iphronline.org/articles/a-worrying-shift-central-asian-governments-move-to-further-curtail-lgbt-rights/>

⁴⁴ See Vlast article from 9 October 2024: <https://vlast.kz/novosti/62194-priznat-feminita-ekstremistskoj-organizacii-trebuut-deputaty-ot-partii-amanat.html>

⁴⁵ See Frontline Defenders statement: <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/feminitas-lesbian-kurultai-under-attack>

⁴⁶ See Vlast article from 9 October 2024: <https://vlast.kz/novosti/62194-priznat-feminita-ekstremistskoj-organizacii-trebuut-deputaty-ot-partii-amanat.html>

⁴⁷ The text of the new law is available (in Russian) at: https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=38665430&pos=859;-27#pos=859;-27

⁴⁸ The expert analysis is available at: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/9/557946.pdf>

⁴⁹ Radio Azattyq article from 26 January 2024: <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/kazakhstan-considers-ban-on-foreign-media-under-pretext-of-national-security/32793343.html>

⁵⁰ RFE/RL article from 23 April 2024: <https://www.rferl.org/a/kazakhstan-rferl-agreement-accreditation/32917503.html>

⁵¹ The rules are available at: <https://legalacts.egov.kz/npa/view?id=15173553>

⁵² See: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/V2400034967>

⁵³ See for example statement issued by the Committee to Protect Journalists, September 2024: <https://cpj.org/2024/09/cpj-concerned-by-kazakhstans-restrictive-new-media-accreditation/>

⁵⁴ <https://adilsoz.kz/news/press-reiz-tipovye-pravila-akkreditacii-zhurnalisty-osparivayut-v-gra.html>

⁵⁵ <https://bes.media/news/sud-otkazal-zhurnalistam-v-iske-protiv-novih-pravil-akkreditatsii-smi-v-kazahstane/>, <https://vlast.kz/novosti/63563-apellacionnyj-sud-ostavil-bez-izmenenij-resenie-po-isku-zurnalistov-k-mininformacii.html>

⁵⁶ See RFE/RL article from 14 October 2024: <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/33157546.html>

⁵⁷ See RFE/RL article from 7 September 2024: <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/33110539.html>

⁵⁸ See, for example, recommendations 139.94, 139.95, 139.96, 139.97 and 139.98 of the outcome document from the UPR review, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/kz-index>

⁵⁹ <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/v-kazahstane-hotyat-uzhestochit-nakazanie-po-state-o-razzhiganii-mezhetnicheskoy-i-religioznoy-vrazhdy-ee-schitayut-politicheskoy/33309195.html>

⁶⁰ See more in IPHR-KIBHR update from December 2023: <https://iphronline.org/articles/kazakhstan-crackdown-on-the-opposition-fight-against-false-information-and-publication-of-foreign-agent-list/>

⁶¹ <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/sud-v-almaty-oshtrafoval-azattyk-po-state-o-rasprostraneni-lozhnoy-informatsii-33209536.html>

⁶² For examples, see our updates: <https://iphronline.org/articles/kazakhstan-crackdown-on-dissent-over-nuclear-power-plant-controversial-media-accreditation-rules-and-anti-lgbtqi-propaganda-measures/>, <https://iphronline.org/articles/kazakhstan-flood-coverage-restrictions-womens-rights-rally-ban-and-legal-cases-against-activists/>

⁶³ For more information on issues related to LGBT rights, see IPHR report *A worrying shift: Central Asian governments move to further curtail LGBT rights*, published in November 2024: <https://iphronline.org/articles/a-worrying-shift-central-asian-governments-move-to-further-curtail-lgbt-rights/>

⁶⁴ For more information about these proposals, see the following media articles: <https://vlast.kz/novosti/59686-ugolovnuu-otvetstvennost-za-propagandu-lgbt-predlagaut-vvesti-deputyaty-ot-pravasej-partii.html>; https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/kazahstane-predlozili-zapretit-smi-pisat-predstavatelyah-531334/

⁶⁵ See more in IPHR-KIBHR update: <https://iphronline.org/articles/kazakhstan-flood-coverage-restrictions-womens-rights-rally-ban-and-legal-cases-against-activists/>

⁶⁶ For two recent examples, see the following KIBHR reports: <https://bureau.kz/novosti/vashe-telo-nashe-delo/>, <https://bureau.kz/novosti/tanczor-i-policziya-nravov/>

⁶⁷ See press release issued by the Ministry of Culture and Information on 9 June 2024: <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/mam/press/news/details/788654?lang=ru>

⁶⁸ See more in Orda article from 1 August 2024: <https://orda.kz/pod-natiskom-mrakobesija-kak-proshlo-obsuzhdenie-peticii-protiv-propagandy-lgbt-389922/>

⁶⁹ See joint statement by five UN experts from 31 July 2024: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/07/kazakhstan-reject-rights-violating-petition-say-un-experts>

⁷⁰ <https://orda.kz/pod-natiskom-mrakobesija-kak-proshlo-obsuzhdenie-peticii-protiv-propagandy-lgbt-389922/>

⁷¹ <https://www.nbcnews.com/nbc-out/out-politics-and-policy/trump-sign-executive-orders-proclaiming-are-only-two-biological-sexes-rcna188388>

⁷² <https://vlast.kz/novosti/63550-deputat-zanbyrsin-trebuot-peresmotret-resenie-po-peticii-o-zaprete-propagandy-lgbt.html>

⁷³ https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/referendum-aes-ozvuchenyi-itogovyie-rezultaty-golosovaniya-550317/

⁷⁴ <https://www.rferl.org/a/kazakhstan-nuclear-referendum-arrests/33146404.html>

⁷⁵ <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/33152420.html>, <https://vlast.kz/novosti/62198-obsesstvennoe-obedinenie-nezavisimye-nabludateli-zaavilo-o-provokaciah-v-almaty-v-den-referenduma.html>

⁷⁶ <https://orda.kz/provokacii-v-voprose-ajes-minjenergo-gotovit-zajavlenie-v-policiju-390983/>

⁷⁷ For examples, see our update published in December 2024: <https://iphronline.org/articles/kazakhstan-crackdown-on-dissent-over-nuclear-power-plant-controversial-media-accreditation-rules-and-anti-lgbtqi-propaganda-measures/>

⁷⁸ See presentation by KIBHR Director Yevgeniy Zhovtis from July 2022: <https://bureau.kz/novosti/vystuplenie-na-meropriyatii-yanvarskim-sobytiyam/>

⁷⁹ See IPHR-KIBHR update from May 2022: <https://iphronline.org/articles/kazakhstan-civic-space-limited-by-continued-fallout-from-january-2022-events/>

⁸⁰ For a list of these prisoners, see https://tirik.info/lists/wpbdp_category/list01/

⁸¹ For more information on his case, see IPHR statement from 19 April 2023: <https://iphronline.org/articles/kazakhstan-opposition-party-leader-banned-from-campaigning/>, and joint statement by IPHR, KIBHR, Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights and Norwegian Helsinki Committee from 12 June 2022: <https://iphronline.org/articles/kazakhstan-drop-trumped-up-charges-release-opposition-leader/>

⁸² For a more detailed case description, see IPHR-KIBHR briefing paper from April 2024: <https://iphronline.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/briefing-paper-for-eu-kazakhstan-hr-dialogue-april-2024.pdf>

⁸³ See the previous endnote.

⁸⁴ See IPHR-KIBHR statement from 1 December 2023: <https://iphronline.org/articles/kazakhstan-harsh-sentence-for-opposition-party-leader-shows-lack-of-real-political-modernisation/>

⁸⁵ See more in media article from 6 June 2024: exclusive.kz/verhovnyj-sud-otkazal-v-rassmotrenii-zhaloby-marata-zhylanbaeva/

⁸⁶ See more in media article from 18 June 2024: <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/32997936.html>

⁸⁷ See IPHR-KIBHR statement: <https://iphronline.org/articles/kazakhstan-harsh-sentence-for-opposition-party-leader-shows-lack-of-real-political-modernisation/>

⁸⁸ See RFE/RL article from 27 September 2024: <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/33137797.html>

⁸⁹ For more information on the case, see the following KIBHR articles: <https://bureau.kz/goryachee/vlast-presleduet-svoih-mertveczov/>, <https://bureau.kz/goryachee/politicheskogo-reshili-pustit/>

⁹⁰ See KIBHR update from 2 August 2024: <https://bureau.kz/goryachee/srok-za-intervyu/>

⁹¹ <https://vlast.kz/novosti/62963-zurnalist-duman-muhammedkarim-nanes-sebe-uvece-trebua-perevoda-v-koloniu-bliz-almaty.html>

⁹² For a more detailed case description, see IPHR-KIBHR briefing paper from April 2024: <https://iphronline.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/briefing-paper-for-eu-kazakhstan-hr-dialogue-april-2024.pdf>

⁹³ <https://bureau.kz/goryachee/kapchagajskoe-dezhavyu/>

⁹⁴ <https://bureau.kz/goryachee/kapchagajskoe-dezhavyu/>

- ⁹⁵ <https://last.kz/novosti/63501-sud-arestoval-na-dva-mesaca-avtora-satiriceskogo-pablika-qaznews24.html>
- ⁹⁶ <https://kaztag.kz/ru/news/ugolovnoe-delo-avtora-pablika-qaznews24-temirlana-ensebeka-politsiya-ne-svyazyvaet-s-satiroy>
- ⁹⁷ <https://mediazona.ca/article/2025/01/23/kz-Yensebek>
- ⁹⁸ <https://bureau.kz/novosti/satira-ne-prestuplenie/>
- ⁹⁹ <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/avtora-satiriceskogo-pablika-qaznews24-temirlana-ensebeka-otpravili-pod-strazhu-na-dva-mesyatsa/33280376.html>
- ¹⁰⁰ <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/soratniki-arestovannogo-avtora-satiriceskogo-pablika-vystupili-v-ego-zaschitu-advokat-schitaet-cto-ego-presleduyut-za-deyatelnost/33291390.html>
- ¹⁰¹ <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/32034634.html>
- ¹⁰² For a more detailed case description, see IPHR-KIBHR briefing paper from April 2024: <https://iphronline.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/briefing-paper-for-eu-kazakhstan-hr-dialogue-april-2024.pdf>
- ¹⁰³ For a more detailed case description, see IPHR-KIBHR update from June 2024: <https://iphronline.org/articles/kazakhstan-flood-coverage-restrictions-womens-rights-rally-ban-and-legal-cases-against-activists/>
- ¹⁰⁴ <https://ru.qaz365.kz/society/10826-pravozashchitnitsa-dina-tansari-oproverglazaiavlenie-genprokuratury-ob-ekstraditsii/>
- ¹⁰⁵ See joint communication by the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders and other UN experts from 18 March 2024: <https://srdefenders.org/kazakhstan-criminal-charges-against-and-placement-on-an-international-wanted-list-of-whrd-dinara-smailova-joint-communication/>
- ¹⁰⁶ See more on the case in the following articles: <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/33143196.html>, <https://last.kz/novosti/63152-pravozasitniki-bespokoatsa-o-zdorove-ajdara-mubarakova-zaderzannogo-pered-referendumom-o-stroitelstve-aes.html>, <https://last.kz/novosti/62043-v-almaty-zaderzali-12-aktivistov-vystupausih-protiv-stroitelstva-aes.html>
- ¹⁰⁷ <https://last.kz/novosti/63655-sud-opat-prodlil-na-mesac-arest-pati-aktivistam-zaderzannym-v-almaty-pered-referendumom-po-stroitelstvu-aes.html>
- ¹⁰⁸ <https://last.kz/novosti/63152-pravozasitniki-bespokoatsa-o-zdorove-ajdara-mubarakova-zaderzannogo-pered-referendumom-o-stroitelstve-aes.html>
- ¹⁰⁹ For more information, see IPHR-KIBHR update from June 2024: <https://iphronline.org/articles/kazakhstan-flood-coverage-restrictions-womens-rights-rally-ban-and-legal-cases-against-activists/>
- ¹¹⁰ <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/karakalpakiy-aktivist-ekstradirovan-iz-kazahstana-v-uzbekistan/33282280.html>
- ¹¹¹ <https://tmhelsinki.org/article/f785d106-a84f-4a80-9679-9d387ba95bd5>
- ¹¹² For more information, see Human Rights Watch statement issued on 26 February 2024: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/02/26/kazakhstan-arrest-karakalpak-activist-uzbekistans-behest>
- ¹¹³ See more in Radio Azattyk report from 2 July 2024: <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/33018142.html>
- ¹¹⁴ Available at: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNsmiVP_84KPtswCMNgz75A/videos?cbrd=1
- ¹¹⁵ See media report from 23 October 2024: <https://orda.kz/avtorov-youtube-kanala-base-objavili-v-rozysk-v-kazahstane-378090/>
- ¹¹⁶ See announcement by the Ukrainian General Prosecutor's Office from 25 June 2024: <https://www.gp.gov.ua/ua/posts/ofis-generalnogo-prokurora-rozpocinaje-ekstradiiciu-proceduru-shhodo-pidozryvanix-u-zamaxu-na-vbivstvo-kazaxskogo-zurnalista>