

Proposal for an urgent resolution/debate addressing the human rights situation in the Republic of Kazakhstan and its assistance to Russia to circumvent international sanctions for the war against Ukraine¹

Tokayev's presidency was overshadowed by the largest anti-government protests in the history of independent Kazakhstan in January 2022, during which over 200 civilians were officially shot dead and at least 1 273 convicted on fabricated criminal charges. Tokayev's power was only maintained through the Russian military intervention. **Despite Kazakhstan's declarations of reforms, liberalisation of political life and compliance with international obligations, not only has large-scale political repression continued, but a system of assistance to Russia has been built to circumvent international sanctions for the war against Ukraine.**

The authorities have blamed the mass killing of civilians on protesters, activists, lawyers and journalists and subjected them to prosecution, torture and harassment.

There have been no independent investigation into the violent suppression of the protests. The authorities concealed the scale of crimes against civilians, as well as the foreign intervention to crush the protests.

As a result of international pressure and in order to avoid personal sanctions, amnesty has been granted to 1 151 victims of persecution. However, those convicted were not acquitted and an 'unspent criminal record' has been maintained, resulting in their financial isolation (inability to hold bank accounts nor access any financial services) due to prosecution on 'extremism' charges. In addition, the amnesty also applied to law enforcement officials allowing them to avoid responsibility for the shooting of civilians, mass arbitrary detention and torture during the January events.

As of June 2023, **Kazakhstan had 45 identified political prisoners and the number continues to grow. 24 persons have been sentenced to prison terms and 21 are held in pre-trial detention.**

Early presidential elections were held in November 2022 and early parliamentary elections in March 2023. No opposition candidate was allowed to run in the presidential election or enter parliament. Following the banning of the opposition movements Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan and Koshe Partiyasy, as allegedly "extremist", a crackdown on their members has begun.

Marat Zhylanbayev, a leader of the opposition party Alga Kazakhstan (Kazakhstan Forward)² was arrested for two months after protesting in Astana and demanding sanctions against top Kazakhstani officials over the country's assistance in financing Russia's war against Ukraine. Activists Zhandarbek Bashanov and Askar Sembai were also arrested and prosecuted. Pro-

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² <https://twitter.com/WLCongress/status/1673779271548952576?s=20>

Ukrainian rallies have been banned and those who publicise the circumvention of sanctions are being repressed.

The above facts put at stake Kazakhstan's international credibility and its effective engagement in the field of human rights. For instance, since the EU-Kazakhstan Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement put an emphasis on fundamental freedoms and the adoption of the EP's 2022 urgent resolution, no tangible steps have been taken.

As detailed by human rights groups, the Kazakh opposition and international media, Kazakhstan remains a vital ally and enabler in circumvention of European and international sanctions, developing economic cooperation with Russia in strategic areas. Thus, economic and trade agreements with the EU, UK and other Western actors are abused for the benefit of Russia.

For all these reasons, we request Western Parliaments table an urgent follow-up resolution to tackle these concerns.