

# Joint statement by members of the Civic Solidarity Platform and other NGOs on the alarming situation in Kazakhstan

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*6 January 2021*

We, the undersigned members of the Civic Solidarity Platform (CSP) and other NGOs are extremely concerned about the tense situation in Kazakhstan. In the light of rapidly evolving events, we urge all protesters to refrain from the use of violence and the authorities of Kazakhstan to ensure that all their actions taken in response to the protests strictly comply with their obligations under international human rights law and are aimed at de-escalating the situation peacefully.

The current situation evolved after peaceful protests against rising fuel prices in the town of Zhanaozen spread to several other cities across the country, with thousands of people participating and additional demands being voiced by protestors. On 5 January, clashes ensued in Almaty between law enforcement and security forces and protesters, some of which seized government buildings and other public property, including Almaty airport. Late on 5 January, a nation-wide state of emergency was declared in Kazakhstan following the earlier resignation of the government cabinet and a pledge by President Tokayev to use the ‘‘harshest possible’’ measures

against the protesters. There were reports of shooting, arson and acts of looting in Almaty at night. Yesterday President Tokayev requested assistance from the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a military alliance between six post-Soviet states in order to combat a threat he classified as “terrorist”, and CSTO peacekeeping forces are reportedly already on their way to Kazakhstan.

According to official information, at least 300 people have been injured, and several dozen police officers and protesters have died during clashes. The exact number of casualties and deaths among protesters is unclear at this time, reinforcing concerns about disproportionate use of force. According to the authorities, over 200 persons have been detained so far during the protests across the country, although observers report that the real figure is much higher. According to observers, detainees have been denied access to lawyers and there are serious concerns about the failure to safeguard their right to due process and fair trials. There have been re-occurring internet outages in the country since yesterday and some journalists have reportedly been detained when carrying out their professional obligations. The well- documented pattern of systematic violations of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly in Kazakhstan reinforces our concerns regarding the current situation.

As the situation evolves, we continue to monitor the situation closely. We welcome the appeals for restraint and peaceful solutions made by representatives of the EU, OSCE, UN and other international institutions and foreign governments, and call on protesters to refrain from unlawful measures and on the authorities of Kazakhstan to:

- Ensure that the fundamental rights and freedoms of all residents are respected at all times, and that the current situation does not escalate into an armed conflict;
- Ensure that their response to the ongoing protests is in

strict compliance with international human rights standards, in particular that non-violent means are exhausted in each case before the use of force, and that the use of force is proportionate, damage and injury is minimized and human lives protected;

- Respect the right of residents to peaceful assembly, freedom of expression and freedom of association and ensure that any restrictions imposed on these rights meet the requirements of international human rights law, including by distinguishing between peaceful and non-peaceful protest participants;
- Ensure that cooperation with CSTO forces is carried out strictly within the framework of international law and does not result in human rights violations;
- Provide full information about the number of people who have been detained in connection with the protests in the last few days, as well as where they are held, and ensure that they have prompt access to legal assistance, and that their right to freedom from torture and ill-treatment, due process and fair trials are respected;
- Provide full figures of the number of protesters who have been injured and killed, and ensure independent, transparent, prompt and effective investigation into these cases, as well as all cases of the use of force by law enforcement authorities and military resulting in casualties with a view to holding any official responsible for the excessive use of force accountable;
- Ensure that any measures taken to investigate and prosecute unlawful actions by protestors are in full accordance with due process requirements and Kazakhstan's international obligations;
- Ensure respect of the right to freedom of information and unhindered access to different means of communication, including the internet;
- Refrain from detaining journalists who are covering the events as part of their professional duties and ensure the safety of journalists;

- Ensure that civil society representatives are able to monitor the situation without hindrance and allow representatives from the National Preventative Mechanism to visit detained protesters;
- Fully cooperate with the OSCE and the UN in resolving the current

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Signatories:

Association for Human Rights in Central Asia (France)  
Association UMDPL (Ukraine)

Belarusian Helsinki Committee (Belarus) Bulgarian Helsinki  
Committee (Bulgaria) Centre for Civil Liberties (Ukraine)

Centre for Participation and Development (Georgia)

Centre for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights  
(Russian Federation) Citizens' Watch (Russian Federation)

Crude Accountability (The United States of America) Foundation  
of Regional Initiatives (Ukraine) Freedom Now (The United  
States of America)

Georgian Centre For Psychosocial And Medical Rehabilitation Of  
Torture Victims (GCRT) (Georgia)

Helsinki Citizens' Assembly – Vanadzor (Armenia) Helsinki  
Federation for Human Rights (Poland) Human Rights Centre (HRC)  
(Georgia)

Human rights center Viasna (Belarus) Human Rights Center ZMINA  
(Ukraine) Human Rights Club (Azerbaijan) Human Rights Matter  
e.V. (Germany)

Human Rights Monitoring Institute (Lithuania)

Human Rights Movement «Bir Duino-Kyrgyzstan» (Kyrgyzstan)  
Hungarian Helsinki Committee (Hungary)

International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR) (Belgium)  
KRF Public Alternative (Ukraine)

Lawtrend (Belarus) Legal Initiative (Belarus)

Libereco Partnership for Human Rights (Germany) Macedonian  
Helsinki Committee (North Macedonia) Netherlands Helsinki  
Committee (Netherlands) Norwegian Helsinki Committee (Norway)

Office of Civil Liberties (Tajikistan) Promo LEX (Moldova)

Protection of Rights without Borders (Armenia) Public  
Foundation Notabene (Tajikistan)

Public organization «Dawn» (Tajikistan) Public Verdict  
(Russian Federation) SOVA Center (Russian Federation)

Swedish OSCE-network (Sweden)

Swiss Helsinki Committee (Switzerland) Truth Hounds (Ukraine)

Vostok SOS (Ukraine)