

KYRGYZSTAN: CIVIL SOCIETY APPEALS FOR DIALOGUE, RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE RULE OF LAW IN THE CURRENT TIMES OF TURMOIL

9 October 2020

We, members of the Civic Solidarity Platform (CSP) – a network of human rights NGOs from across Europe, the former Soviet Union and North America – express our support and solidarity with Kyrgyzstan’s civil society in its efforts to ensure respect for human rights and the rule of law at this time of political crisis and upheaval in the Central Asian country. We call on the authorities of Kyrgyzstan, as well as on all the groups staking claims on power to opt for dialogue and cooperation, refrain from violence, and act strictly within the framework of national and international law with a view to overcoming the current uncertainty, power struggles and threats of lawlessness and to continuing the course of democratic development. To this end, we call in particular for:

- Inclusive negotiations to agree on urgent measures to end the current standoff, ensure the functioning of state bodies, and facilitate a peaceful transition of power in accordance with the requirements of the country’s constitution and legislation.
- Prompt new, free and fair parliamentary elections that fully meet international standards and truly reflect the will of the people.
- The protection of fundamental rights at this time of crisis, including free speech and media freedom, the right to protest peacefully, freedom of association, the right to democratic participation, the right not to be subjected to torture and ill-treatment nor to be subjected to excessive force, as well as the right to life and security of person.
- The protection of journalists, human rights defenders and others who monitor and document current developments and assist victims of violations.
- Consultation with civil society and international institutions on measures needed to resolve the crisis and ensure compliance with Kyrgyzstan’s international obligations.
- The implementation of effective measures to guarantee the safety of citizens and calm growing societal tensions, including those of a regional and ethnic nature.
- Commitment to principles of democratic and law-based governance, the separation of powers, the rule of law, anti-corruption, transparency, transitional justice, and accountability for human rights violations, including those perpetrated in connection with the current and previous crises in the country – irrespective of the political or other affiliations of the perpetrators.
- As soon as the situation permits, thorough and impartial investigations into all allegations of irregularities during the 4 October parliamentary elections, as well as allegations of the use of excessive force and other human rights violations committed in connection with the post-election protests with a view to ensuring that those responsible are held to account.

We also urge Kyrgyzstan’s international partners to use all means at their disposal to promote the positions set out above and to help ensure a peaceful settlement of the current crisis in Kyrgyzstan.

Signed by:

1. International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR, Belgium)
2. The Norwegian Helsinki Committee
3. Bir Duino Human Rights Movement (Kyrgyzstan)
4. Public Association "Dignity" (Kazakhstan)
5. Minority Rights Group Europe (Hungary)
6. Helsinki Committee of Armenia
7. Macedonian Helsinki Committee
8. Helsinki Citizens' Assembly – Vanadzor (Armenia)
9. Swedish OSCE-network
10. The Barys Zvozkau Belarusian Human Rights House (Lithuania)
11. IDP Women Association "Consent" (Georgia)
12. The Georgian Centre for Psychosocial and Medical Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (GCRT)
13. Promo LEX Association (Moldova)
14. Bulgarian Helsinki Committee
15. The Human Rights Center (HRC, Georgia)
16. Centre for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights (Russia)
17. DRA (Germany)
18. Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (HFHR, Poland)
19. Truth Hounds (Ukraine/Georgia)
20. Sova Center for Information and Analysis (Russia)
21. Women of the Don (Russia)
22. Public Verdict Foundation (Russia)
23. The Association of Ukrainian Human Rights Monitors on Law Enforcement (UMDPL)
24. Center for Participation and Development (Georgia)
25. Netherlands Helsinki Committee
26. Libereco Partnership for Human Rights (Germany, Switzerland)
27. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF, Germany)
28. Kharkiv regional foundation Public Alternative (Ukraine)
29. Crude Accountability (United States)
30. Human Rights House Foundation (Switzerland)
31. World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT, Switzerland)
32. Freedom Now (USA)
33. Humanrights.ch (Switzerland)
34. Swiss Helsinki Committee
35. Human Rights Centre "Viasna" (Belarus)

Background:

The parliamentary elections held in Kyrgyzstan on 4 October 2020 were [marred by allegations of fraud](#), in particular vote buying and the use of so-called administrative resources during the election campaign to promote support for pro-government candidates. According to the preliminary results, announced in the evening of 4 October, representatives of only four parties had made it into the new parliament: those of three pro-presidential parties and one op-

position party. This announcement prompted mass protests by opposition representatives and their supporters in the capital Bishkek and other cities. The protests on Bishkek's main Ala-Too Square took place peacefully without interference by law enforcement authorities until the evening of 5 October, when police started dispersing protesters using water cannons, tear gas, flash grenades and rubber bullets following an apparent attempt by some protesters to break into the White House, where the parliament and president are seated. Clashes between police and protesters ensued, [resulting in](#) over 600 people being injured and requiring medical treatment with one protester dead. Over one hundred people still remain in hospital, some in a serious condition. There were also reports of attacks on journalists, in connection with the election and the post-election protests, including by police. In the morning of 6 October, some protesters stormed and took control of the White House and other public buildings, and several high-profile prisoners were freed, among them former President Almazbek Atambayev who was being held on corruption charges and former MP Sadyr Japarov who was serving a sentence for hostage taking.

On 6 October, the Central Election Commission annulled the results of the parliamentary elections, but no date for new elections has been set up to now. Following the post-election protests, several top officials left their positions but President Sooronbay Jeenbekov currently remains in office, in spite of calls for his resignation and an attempt to impeach him. However, on 9 October, he [announced his readiness](#) to step down “after legitimate executive authorities are approved”, and [signed a decree](#) approving the resignation of Prime Minister Kubatbek Boronov and his cabinet.

At this time, different political groups, including so-called coordination councils are seeking to assume control in the country with appointments of public officials being made outside the legal framework and representatives of the old nomenclature seeking to regain power. As a result, there is a lack of clarity as to who is in power and the situation remains highly volatile. There have also been reports of looting and growing insecurity among residents, and there are concerns that tensions – including those of a regional and ethnic nature – may further increase. On 9 October, [clashes](#) between protesters in Bishkek resulted in several people being injured, and several political figures alleging that their cars had been shot at. The president [declared](#) a state of emergency in the capital, a regime that allows for introducing a curfew, a ban on assemblies and other restrictive measures.