

Collecting, verifying and organizing open-source evidence on human rights violations in Kazakhstan

Call for volunteer support

BACKGROUND

In early January, peaceful protests against rising fuel prices in the town of Zhanaozen spread to several other cities in Kazakhstan, 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. Later that day, a nation-wide state of emergency was declared 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. 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 were deployed to the country.

According to official information, hundreds of people have been injured, and there have been at least 160 deaths amongst police officers and protesters 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, 10,000 persons have been detained so far during the protests across the country, although observers report that the real figure is 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.

Reports, videos and pictures of police brutality and excessive use of force taken by bystanders and citizen journalists are being collected. Identifying, verifying, safely archiving and organizing this evidence is vital for future accountability efforts.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

Truth Hounds and *International Partnership for Human Rights* are looking for volunteers who will support our efforts of collecting, verifying and archiving open source evidence of mass human rights violations and acts of violence by protestors in Kazakhstan. **We are particularly looking for audio visual information of human rights abuses relating to the events in early January in the country. These videos can be submitted with full anonymity.**

Welcome to apply are individuals who speak Russian and/ or Kazakh, have basic computer skills, access to the internet and can spend a couple of hours per day to make a contribution to ensuring accountability for human rights violations in Kazakhstan. You can contribute to the project from any location, as long as you have a computer with internet access.

We anticipate that volunteer contributions will be needed for at least 12 weeks.

How will the collected evidence be used?

We plan to use the collected evidence to shed light on the systemic and widespread nature of abuse by law enforcement agents in Kazakhstan as well as the incidents of violence by protestors against law enforcement officials and other civilians. In the short term they collected evidence will be used for advocacy purposes. In the long term we are hoping that the evidence will be used by the courts to prosecute the perpetrators of grave crimes and human rights abuses.

Will there be a training for volunteers?

Truth Hounds and IPHR will provide basic instruction and on the job coaching for all volunteers who are interested. You will learn how to work with open-source evidence including identification, verification, downloading and archiving of videos/photos and other types of open-source data.

We will provide you with practical tools that you will be using throughout the research process and your work will be supervised by experienced researchers.

Where can you apply?

If you feel enthusiastic about this project and have the necessary skills please write to: [*volunteersint@protonmail.com*](mailto:volunteersint@protonmail.com)