

To: President of France, Emmanuel Macron

Brussels, 30 October 2023

Re: Human Rights Issues for Visit to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan

Dear President Macron,

On behalf of International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR), a Brussels-based NGO working closely with civil society groups across Central Asia, we are writing to you prior to your upcoming [visit](#) to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan on 1-2 November 2023.

Despite official rhetoric around political reform and modernization, and some limited steps taken to this end, credible reports from civil society groups and activists in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan indicate that the human rights situation in both countries does not only remain serious but has recently deteriorated further. We urge you to use your meetings with President Tokayev and President Mirziyoyev to raise concerns about this trend. In particular, we appeal to you to raise the lack of accountability for serious human rights violations related to the crises seen in the two countries in 2022, when the authorities employed harsh measures to end mass, mostly peaceful, protests against government policies during the so-called 'Bloody January' events in Kazakhstan and in the Republic of Karakalpakstan in Uzbekistan.

In the aftermath of these 2022 events, measures taken to investigate allegations of excessive use of force, torture and ill-treatment, and other violations of the rights of protesters, as well as to bring those responsible to justice have lacked independence, thoroughness, and effectiveness, resulting in widespread impunity for serious human rights abuses. Moreover, the impact of these events on fundamental freedoms in the two countries has been dramatic and IPHR and its partners have documented increasing intimidation, harassment and politically-motivated persecution of human rights defenders, activists, independent lawyers, journalists and bloggers who speak out against government policies and in defence of the rights of citizens in both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Pressure on independent media and restrictions on access to alternative information through the internet; excessive and unjustified restrictions on the operation of independent civil society organisations; and practices undermining the right to peacefully protest are other worrying trends that continue to erode civic space in both countries.

These trends were documented in more detail in a recent [briefing paper](#) on the key trends regarding civic space and the protection of fundamental freedoms in the five Central Asian countries, which was prepared by IPHR and its Central Asian partner organisations.

We also urge you to use this opportunity – both publicly and non-publicly – to remind the leaders of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan that France, and the EU, pay close attention to their governments' compliance with international human rights standards and expects concrete progress in this area as a condition for a further strengthening of partnerships and cooperation in different areas.

We thank you in advance for your attention to our appeal and wish you productive discussions with the Kazakhstani and Uzbekistani leaders.

Sincerely,



Brigitte Dufour

International Partnership for Human Rights