IPHR International Partnership for Human Rights

THE PROTECTION OF FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS AND CIVIC SPACE IN KYRGYZSTAN: KEY CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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IPHR - International Partnership for Human Rights is an independent, non-governmental organisation founded in 2008. Based in Brussels, IPHR works closely together with civil society groups from different countries to raise human rights concerns at the international level and promote respect for the rights of vulnerable communities in repressive environments.

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Summary of concerns and calls to the EU

The EU's deepened engagement with Kyrgyzstan through the Enhanced Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (EPCA), signed last year and currently pending ratification, underscores the importance of upholding democratic principles and human rights as fundamental pillars of this relationship.

However, the recent alarming restrictions on civic freedoms in Kyrgyzstan—including pressure on independent voices and civil society—directly contradict these commitments. We reiterate our call for the EU to use its engagement and available means of leverage to encourage Kyrgyzstani authorities to reverse restrictive policies, safeguard open debate, and support—rather than hinder—civil society participation.

Once considered the most open in Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan's civic space is now classified as "repressed" by the CIVICUS Monitor – a global initiative tracking civic freedoms with which International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR) and its Central Asian partners cooperate. This is the second-worst rating, with civic space in Kyrgyzstan assessed at a score of 36 on a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 represents the lowest and 100 the highest level of protection.[1]

Recent alarming civic space trends in Kyrgyzstan, which are covered in this briefing, include:

The adoption of a "foreign agent"-style NGO law:

A law adopted in Kyrgyzstan in spring 2024 requires NGOs that receive foreign funding and engage in broadly defined "political activities" to register as "foreign representatives" – a highly stigmatising label. In an important legal opinion, the Council of Europe's Venice Commission concluded that the law violates Kyrgyzstan's international obligations and called for its repeal. The law imposes excessive state control of NGOs, with harsh penalties for non-compliance, including suspension or closure. It has fostered a climate of fear and self-censorship, and has led some NGOs to self-liquidate or restrict their activities to avoid being targeted. Although only a few organisations have registered as "foreign representatives" so far, any NGOs working to influence public decision-making, policies or public opinion on issues of concern to them and their communities could potentially be pressured to do so.

In December 2024, President Sadyr Japarov publicly accused well-known independent media and human rights organisations of failing to adequately report on the use of foreign funding and spreading "false" information, thereby reinforcing mistrust and hostility towards them. Human rights defender Aziza Abdurasulova temporarily fled Kyrgyzstan in December 2024 due to threats she received following the president's statements.

Growing pressure on independent media:

Independent media in Kyrgyzstan have faced growing pressure through raids, criminal investigations, and other restrictive measures. For example, the 24.kg office was sealed for two months during a "war propaganda" investigation linked to its coverage of Russia's war against Ukraine, while the Temirov Live channel - known for investigating high-level corruption - saw its work disrupted by the mass arrests of its journalists. In summer 2024, the Supreme Court confirmed the closure of the organisation behind the award-winning Kloop platform.

A controversial media law proposing extensive state regulation of media and online platforms was revised and improved following widespread criticism. The revised version is currently pending in Parliament.

Misuse of the fight against disinformation to prevent free information exchange:

The government has repeatedly blocked—or threatened to block—independent news sites for allegedly posting "false" information under a controversial 2021 law. Several other recent legislative initiatives aimed at preventing the spread of allegedly false or discrediting information also raise free speech concerns. Amendments to the Code of Offenses, signed into law by the president in January 2025, grant police discretionary powers to fine those accused of spreading defamatory or "false" information. While the amendments were revised following criticism, the risk remains that they could be misused to suppress criticism of the government.
Another recent legal initiative, which proposed banning the sharing of photo and video recordings "discrediting" law enforcement, was eventually voted down by Parliament in late 2024. Prior to this, reports emerged about police officers citing it to prohibit the recording of their actions, despite it not being adopted.

Yet other draft legislation, put forward by the government in autumn 2024, proposes re-criminalising the possession of "extremist" material without clearly defining the term, while a 2023 law prohibits the dissemination of information that "contradicts family values" and "promotes non-traditional sexual relations". These provisions could also be used to suppress freedom of expression.

Blanket restrictions on peaceful protests:

While peaceful protests are often held without interference, prolonged blanket bans on assemblies pose a serious threat to freedom of assembly. These restrictions, criticised by human rights groups and international experts, violate national and international standards protecting peaceful assembly. In a particularly problematic example, peaceful protests have been banned in central Bishkek for almost three years following a request from the Russian embassy to prevent anti-war protests near its premises. Most recently, a local court extended the ban through March 2025.

Increasing persecution of civil society activists, journalists and bloggers:

Civil society activists, opposition supporters, journalists, and bloggers who criticise authorities face increasing persecution, including arrest, prosecution, and imprisonment.

In October 2024, Temirov Live's director, Makhabat Tazhibek Kyzy, and colleague Azamat Ishenbekov received prison sentences, while two other Temirov Live journalists were placed on probation due to their work investigating corruption. Their sentences were upheld on appeal. Bolot Temirov, the platform's founder, remains in exile after being unlawfully stripped of his citizenship and expelled in 2022.

In November 2024, lawyer Samat Matsakov was arrested and criminally charged under circumstances suggesting he was targeted for defending clients in politically sensitive cases, with serious procedural violations undermining the legal actions against him. He currently remains in pre-trial detention. His case has been widely criticised as an attack on the independence of the legal profession.

The recent arrest of Temirlan Sultanbekov, leader of the opposition Social Democrats party, along with two party representatives on vote-buying charges, has also raised alarm amid growing government efforts to suppress political pluralism and dissent. Sultanbekov's health has severely deteriorated in pre-trial detention due to an extended hunger strike, sparking fears for his life.

In another high-profile case, 22 activists charged after opposing a border deal over the Kempir-Abad reservoir were unexpectedly acquitted in June 2024 and released after spending up to 19 months in detention. However, their freedom remains precarious as prosecutors have appealed against the acquittal, with the hearings in the case having been repeatedly postponed.

In addition, activists, bloggers, and journalists are increasingly prosecuted because of government-critical social media posts, with cases based on vaguely worded Criminal Code provisions and questionable state expert conclusions. While some individuals prosecuted on these grounds have received fines or probational sentences, others have been imprisoned. Several trials are still ongoing, including in the case of a former National Academy of Sciences employee who was prosecuted after testifying about security service influence on expert reviews in cases related to social media posts.

In some cases, the government's persecution of critics has extended beyond Kyrgyzstan's borders. For example, it has sought the extradition of a civil society activist who previously fled the country, requesting his return from the United Arab Emirates on spurious charges. The request is currently under review.

These trends are described in more detail in the sections below. Additional information is available in our regular updates on Kyrgyzstan, prepared for the CIVICUS Monitor,[2] as well as in our other publications on this country.[3]

In accordance with the EU's value-based partnership with Kyrgyzstan, we urge its institutions and representatives to consistently raise concerns about undue restrictions on civic freedoms with their Kyrgyzstani counterparts. This should occur in bilateral and regional meetings, during country visits, and across all areas of cooperation—including trade and development assistance. It is crucial that the EU insist that Kyrgyzstani authorities take effective measures to reverse the current alarming trends, in line with the recommendations set out below. The EU should also use its available leverage to push for meaningful improvement.

We welcome the European Parliament resolution on Kyrgyzstan, adopted on 19 December 2024[4], which states that the approval of the EPCA "requires Kyrgyzstan's full compliance with its duty to protect human rights and uphold democratic standards." We urge the Parliament and other EU actors to maintain this stance in their ongoing engagement with Kyrgyzstan. The earlier resolution on Kyrgyzstan, adopted on 13 July 2023[5], called for a reassessment of the country's GSP+ benefits in light of the broadening crackdown on fundamental freedoms and the resulting violations of its international human rights obligations. In line with this call, we urge the EU to reassess these benefits as a means to secure concrete measures and tangible improvements in human rights protection.

Finally, urge the EU to continue to provide unwavering support to Kyrgyzstan's civil society amid the unprecedented challenges it faces, including through public expressions of solidarity.

Restrictive legislation affecting non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

"Foreign representative" law

In March 2024, Kyrgyzstan's Parliament passed a controversial foreign agent-style NGO law, although it had been widely criticised by civil society, international human rights bodies, and representatives of the international community. The so-called law on "foreign representatives" was thereafter swiftly signed by President Japarov, who defended this decision with incorrect and misleading arguments, alleging that NGOs previously operated without oversight and used grants arbitrarily.[6] As stressed by IPHR and partners[7], although the law is purportedly aimed at ensuring transparency and accountability of foreign-funded groups, its true intent appears to be to stifle scrutiny, discussion, and criticism of those in power. The law draws heavily on similar Russian legislation, which has been systematically used to discredit, harass and silence NGOs in the past decade.

In accordance with the new law[8], foreign-funded organisations are mandated to register under the stigmatising label of "foreign representatives" if they engage in "political activities". This term is broadly defined as influencing public decision-making, policies or public opinion, e.g., through the organisation of public debates, peaceful protests or other events; the publication of appeals, legal opinions or comments on state policies; or the conduct of sociological research, opinion polls or public awareness raising. NGOs registered as "foreign representatives" will be included in a public registry and forced to use this negative label in all materials they disseminate. Groups that fail to register risk harsh sanctions: following a written warning, their activities can be suspended for up to six months without court approval and subsequently they can be closed down by court. The law also grants authorities extensive powers to oversee NGOs' compliance with their obligations under national law, as well as their own statutes, including by accessing their internal documents, attending their events, and conducting inspections.

The Ministry of Justice will have main responsibility for the implementation of the law. However, separate implementing rules, approved by the government in May 2024[9], grant the Ministry of Justice discretionary powers to engage the tax service, prosecutor's offices and other states bodies in the oversight and control of NGOs. These rules also introduced additional problematic provisions including a requirement for NGOs to provide the names of all staff members when registering as "foreign representatives". The government first announced that NGOs were required to register as "foreign representatives"' within two months from the adoption of the implementing regulations; however, a new government decree adopted in August 2024[10] set the deadline as two months from the official publication of this decree on 9 September 2024.

The new law has caused widespread anxiety and uncertainty among NGOs, especially given the lack of clarity as to how it will be implemented in practice. NGOs that receive funding from foreign donors and conduct activities which can potentially be interpreted as being "political" under the law face the difficult decision of whether to register as "foreign representatives" and submit to stigmatising and excessive state control, refuse to do so and risk suspension and eventual liquidation, or pre-emptively close down their operations.

As of early 2025, only five organisations, including two business-oriented associations and three environmental protection organisations had voluntarily registered as "foreign representatives"[11] and been included in the registry set up for this purpose.[12] However, other organisations have initiated self-liquidation

procedures or limited their public engagement to avoid the potential implications of the law, which shows that the law has already contributed to self-censorship.

It is feared that the government might intensity efforts to enforce the law in coming months. This could lead to increased pressure, particularly on groups working on human rights and other issues sensitive to the authorities, although government representatives initially claimed that there "will be no persecution."[13]

During a public address delivered in December 2024, President Japarov accused independent media and human rights organisations of using foreign funds to spread "false" information and undermine the reputation of others.[14] He also alleged that they conceal information about their actual use of foreign funds in their reporting. These statements served to reinforce mistrust and hostility toward organisations that receive foreign funding and fuelled fears of additional measures targeting such groups.

Moreover, in mid-January 2025, the MP who originally initiated the "foreign representative" law, Nadira Narmatova publicly called on the Ministry of Justice to "speed up" the implementation of the law.[15]

Efforts by CSO representatives to legally challenge the "foreign representative" law and its implementing regulations have, so far, been unsuccessful. For example, the Bir Duino-Kyrgyzstan Human Rights Movement petitioned the Constitutional Court to declare the law unconstitutional, but the Court declined to review the petition.[16] In a separate action, the same organisation requested the annulment of the government's August 2024 decree on the law's implementation, citing inconsistency with national laws. In mid-January 2025, Bishkek's Administrative Court dismissed this petition. However, Bur Duino stated that it will appeal the decision.[17]

In October 2024, the Council of Europe's Venice Commission adopted an important legal opinion on the "foreign representative" law.[18] The Commission concluded that the law fails to meet the requirements set out by Kyrgyzstan's Constitution and international treaties for permissible restrictions on the operation of associations, including the principles of legality, legitimacy, necessity, proportionality, and non-discrimination. It also stressed that the implementation of the law poses a "real risk of stigmatising, silencing and eventually eliminating" NGOs that receive foreign funding, in particular those critical of the government. According to the Commission, this risk is reinforced by the lack of adequate legal recourse for affected organisations. For these reasons, the Commission found that the law deals "a severe blow" to human rights and rule of law in the country. It called for repealing the "foreign representative" amendments and revising the Law on Non-commercial Organisations to align it with international human rights standards and create a supportive environment for civil society.

Additional NGO legislation

Another NGO law, put forward by the presidential administration in autumn 2022[19], also proposed to significantly increase state control over NGOs in violation of Kyrgyzstan's international human rights obligations. Following widespread criticism, the draft law was submitted for review to a government-led working group in February 2023. The timeline for the review has been repeatedly extended.[20] Civil society representatives participating in the working group have previously expressed concerns that their recommendations have not been adequately considered in the revision process, and it is feared that the

draft law may be re-introduced, still featuring highly restrictive provisions governing the registration, operation, and oversight of NGOs working in the country.[21]

Intimidation of NGO representatives

NGO representatives have also faced growing threats and intimidation amid the worsening climate for civil society. In a particularly troubling development, well-known human rights defender Aziza Abdurasulova temporarily fled the country in December 2024 after receiving threats by phone and on social media.[22] These developments took place after President Japarov singled out Abdurasulova and her organisation during his December 2024 address mentioned above.[23]

The intimidation did not end after Abdurasulova's departure from the country. In mid-January 2025, the pro-government Kaganat media released a discrediting video about her[24], which accused her of exploiting minority rights as a pretext to serve foreign interests in domestic affairs, among other allegations. These claims were linked to her work on the case of Azimjan Askarov, an ethnic Uzbek human rights defender who was wrongfully imprisoned for his alleged role in the 2010 interethnic violence in southern Kyrgyzstan and later died in prison.[25] Fellow human rights defenders condemned the video as a shameful attempt to tarnish Abdurasulova's reputation and attack the human rights community. The UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, Mary Lawlor, has also raised concerns, urging the government to investigate the threats and stop the smear campaign against Abdurasulova.[26]

Recommendations

The Kyrgyzstani authorities should:

- Immediately repeal the law on "foreign representatives" due to its stigmatising, discriminatory and excessively restrictive nature, as also called for by the Venice Commission.
- Ensure that any legislative initiatives affecting NGOs fully correspond to international standards and are elaborated in close consultation and cooperation with civil society representatives and international experts.
- Allow NGOs and NGO activists to carry out their important activities without undue interference and harassment and ensure a safe working environment for CSOs. They should promptly investigate any threats against NGO representatives and end smear campaigns.

Pressure on independent media and legislation threatening free speech

Attacks on independent media

Independent media and journalists face increasing pressure in Kyrgyzstan.

In an alarming development, in January 2024, law enforcement authorities raided the offices of the 24.kg news agency and the Temirov Live investigative group and detained journalists associated with these outlets.[27]

The 24.kg journalists were released after questioning, but the office remained sealed for over two months due to allegations of "war propaganda" related to its coverage of Russia's war against Ukraine. In April 2024, the criminal case against the agency was eventually suspended.[28] However, 11 current and former Temirov Live journalists faced criminal charges related to their reporting and went on trial in June 2024, resulting in four of them being convicted (see more under "persecution of activists, journalists and bloggers").

Additionally, the authorities have sought the closure of independent news sites. In February 2024, a local court in Bishkek ordered the dissolution of the organisation running the Kloop news portal at the request of prosecutors. While Kloop was accused of conducting work that goes beyond the scope of its charter, the decision was clearly issued in retaliation for the portal's investigative and independent reporting. Thus, the decision focused on the purported harmful impact of Kloop's "negative" coverage of current affairs and its "sharp criticism" of the government. The portal was even accused of contributing to mental illness, sexual depravity, and drug addiction among the population through its reporting.[29] An appeal filed by Kloop to Bishkek City Court was rejected on technical grounds and in July 2024, the Supreme Court issued a final decision sanctioning the organisation's liquidation. Kloop only learned about this decision the following month. The portal intends to continue its work despite its official liquidation, using alternative platforms.[30]

When commenting on the court decision to shut down Kloop, President Japarov essentially confirmed that the portal was targeted because of its reporting, suggesting that the decision was a response to the portal's "one-sided" and "false" reports.[31] He also claimed that the move "will not affect" freedom of expression in Kyrgyzstan, although Kloop has been a leading source of independent information on developments in the country.

In a joint statement issued in September 2024[32], Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, IPHR and five other international human rights groups criticised the decision to liquidate the Kloop media foundation as an unacceptable attack on media freedom and called for its retraction. They noted that Kloop is an award-winning investigative outlet that also has collaborated with the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), a global investigative journalism network.

Earlier, in April 2023, a local court ruled in favour of a government request to terminate the activities of Radio Azattyk, the local service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL). The reason was a video report about hostilities at Kyrgyzstan's border with Tajikistan, which the authorities claimed contained "war propaganda", although it merely reported the official positions of both countries. Radio Azattyk subsequently reached an agreement with the government, resulting in the reversal of the court decision. However, this case also illustrates the dangers facing independent outlets. In addition, Radio Azattyk remains under scrutiny. For example, in September 2024, President Japarov's press secretary publicly stated that "the question may arise whether we need such a media", alleging that the service's editorial policy is "aimed at deliberately discrediting" the country's leaders. These comments were made in relation to a warning issued to the service because of a report argued to be "false" (see more below).[33]

In another attack on independent media, in December 2024, President Japarov publicly criticised Radio Azattyk, Kloop, Kaktus.media and others of using foreign funds to spread false and slanderous information, without backing up his accusations. (See more in the chapter on restrictive legislation affecting NGOs).

Criticised media law revised

A draft media law submitted to Parliament in December 2023 proposed the imposition of extensive state regulation of media and online platforms, with wide and disproportionate powers granted to authorities to control and sanction them. The draft law drew significant criticism from human rights groups, the media community, and international experts due to its inconsistency with the constitution and international human rights standards. In response, President Japarov ordered the withdrawal of the draft law from Parliament in March 2024, and the establishment of a working group including media representatives to revise it. A revised version of the media law, presented by the working group in June 2024[34], marked a clear improvement over the previous version, with major concerns addressed. For example, a proposed requirement for websites to obtain state registration was excluded, criticised accreditation rules were revised, and the procedure for suspending or closing media operations was clarified. Despite some remaining problematic provisions, media representatives considered it an acceptable compromise.[35] Following public consultation and review by various government agencies, the revised draft law was submitted to Parliament on 31 December 2024.[36] It will first be considered at committee level before proceeding to a vote by the full legislative body.

Concerns over other free speech related legislation

Several recent legislative initiatives aimed at preventing the spread of allegedly false, discrediting or harmful information raise serious concerns, as they contain vague wording that can be misused to suppress legitimate free speech.

A controversial law adopted in 2021 allows the Ministry of Culture and Information to block access to websites over alleged "false" information without court approval.[37] The Ministry has repeatedly used the law to suspend access to independent news sites, such as Kloop, Radio Azattyk, 24.kg and others.[38] In September 2024, the Ministry threatened to block the *Novye Litsa* site unless it promptly removed an article about the alleged involvement of associates of the late Russian mercenary leader Yevgeny Prigozhin in President Japarov's 2021 election campaign.[39] The Ministry also warned Radio Azattyk because of a report covering this story.[40]

Media and human rights groups have called for the repeal of the 2021 law, arguing it falls short of international standards for protecting freedom of expression and is being used as a censorship tool. Concerns about its misuse have grown with the recent creation of a new body under the Ministry of Culture and Information, tasked with systematically monitoring the internet for "provocative" or "incorrect" information and initiating blocking measures in response.[41]

Draft amendments to the Code of Offenses, submitted to Parliament in August 2024[42], proposed granting the Ministry of Culture and Information new discretionary powers to fine those accused of disseminating insulting, or slanderous and knowingly false information through media or online channels, with fines amounting to approx. 1000 EUR for individuals and 2000 EUR for legal entities. CSOs expressed serious concerns about the draft legislation, citing the lack of impartiality in the proposed arrangement and the risk of violations of the right to freedom of expression.[43] In an opinion issued at the request of the Ministry of Justice, the Venice Commission concluded that the draft amendments "exhibit significant deficiencies", and expressed concerns that they could promote self-censorship and undermine open public debate.[44] The Ombudsperson also called for a revision of the proposed provisions.[45]

In response to the criticism, the draft amendments were revised. In particular, the authority to implement the new provisions were transferred from the Ministry of Culture to law enforcement agencies, and applicable fines were reduced to approx. 220 EUR for individuals and 730 EUR for legal entities. On 19 December 2024, Parliament passed the revised legislation on its third reading, with 68 deputies voting in favour and only four against.[46] The president subsequently signed it, whereby it will enter into force in February 2025.[47] While the revisions marked an improvement over the original draft, serious concerns remain about the potential misuse of the new provisions to put pressure on independent media, journalists and others critical of the government. With defamation previously having been decriminalised in 2011, the legislation represents a worrying setback.

Other recent draft amendments to the country's criminal legislation proposed banning the dissemination of photo and video materials "discrediting" law enforcement officials, with violations resulting in fines of approximately 50 EUR or detention of up to seven days. The proposed amendments were widely criticised. For example, lawyers from the Media Policy Institute warned that the broadly worded provisions could result in arbitrary implementation violating the rights to freedom of expression and access to information, as any photo or video recordings of law enforcement officials potentially could be deemed "discrediting". The lawyers also stressed that photo and video recordings are essential for ensuring transparency and accountability, noting that such material has often proven instrumental in proving misconduct, leading to appropriate penalties for the law enforcement officials involved.[48]

Despite the criticism, Parliament adopted the draft amendments on the first reading on 1 December 2024.[49] However, in the second reading later that month, a majority of MPs voted against them, leading to their removal from the agenda.[50] Under parliamentary regulations, the earliest the draft legislation could be reconsidered is in six months. While it was still under consideration, worrying reports emerged that law enforcement officials were already citing it to prohibit the recording of their actions, despite it not being adopted.[51]

A so-called law on the protection of children from harmful information, which was adopted in summer 2023, contains vaguely worded provisions that prohibit the dissemination of information that "contradicts family values" and "promotes non-traditional sexual relations". Human rights groups have warned that these provisions might result in violations of the rights to freedom of expression and access to information, including on issues concerning sexual orientation and gender identity.[52]

Further, draft legislation put forward by the government for public consultation in autumn 2024[53] has reinforced concerns about the misuse of "extremism" charges to restrict free speech and suppress dissent given the lack of a clear definition of this term. It is of particular concern that the draft legislation would re-introduce criminal liability for the mere possession of "extremist" material – an offense that was previously decriminalised in 2019. It would also allow prosecutors to seek quick court rulings declaring organisations "extremist". At the time of writing, this draft legislation had yet to be submitted to Parliament.

Recommendations

The Kyrgyzstani authorities should:

- In line with the July 2023 European Parliament resolution, cease pressure on independent media outlets and platforms, including by pursuing criminal cases, seeking their closure, blocking access to their sites or obstructing their work in other ways.
- Ensure that the new media law, currently under consideration, fully corresponds to international standards prior to its adoption and that its implementation does not result in violations of the freedom of media or expression.
- Repeal the 2021 law on the protection from "false" information on the internet in its current format and ensure that it is not used to block online resources because they publish information critical of those in power.
- Refrain from enforcing the amendments to the country's Code of Offences regarding the dissemination of insulting, slanderous and knowingly false information and revise the legislation in accordance with the Venice Commission's recommendations.
- Refrain from moving ahead with the proposed ban on the dissemination of photo and video materials "discrediting" law enforcement officials.
- Revise the legislation on the protection of children from harmful information to ensure it cannot be used to restrict the dissemination of or access to information in violation of Kyrgyzstan's international obligations.
- Further revise the draft legislation on "extremist" related offenses to ensure that it corresponds with Kyrgyzstan's international obligations and cannot be misused to unduly curtail freedom of expression or other fundamental rights.

Blanket bans on protests and violations of the freedom of assembly

While people in Kyrgyzstan often hold peaceful protests without interference, there are also threats to freedom of peaceful assembly. The imposition of prolonged blanket bans on peaceful protests in central areas of Bishkek and other cities is of particular concern.

In spring 2022, a local court in Bishkek banned peaceful protests outside the Russian embassy, near the presidential and parliament building, on Ala-Too Square and in other central areas of the capital. This ruling was issued following a request from the Russian embassy to prevent protests against the Russian war against Ukraine outside its premises. Protesters were instructed to instead gather in a specifically designated park (Gorky Park), while official events were exempted from the ban, illustrating its discriminatory nature. The ban has been repeatedly prolonged since it was first introduced, with the most recent extension by Bishkek's Pervomaisky District Court covering the period from the end of December 2024 to the end of March 2025.[54] Thus, the ban has been in force for close to three years by now.

While local authorities have claimed that the blanket ban on assemblies in central Bishkek is necessary to prevent "possible mass unrest", its enforcement has prevented citizens from holding peaceful protests on issues important to them within the sight and sound of major target audiences. Police has also used the ban to justify the detention of peaceful protesters on several occasions.[55]

An attempt by activists to legally challenge the blanket ban in Bishkek was turned down in summer 2024:

- On 3 July 2024, activists gathered at a bus stop near the Philharmonic Hall in Bishkek to protest the dismantling of trolleybus services. However, police redirected them to Gorky Park, referring to the blanket ban on assemblies. The activists tried to challenge this ban by filing an appeal with Bishkek City Court on 18 July 2024. However, the court refused to accept the appeal on the grounds that the appeal deadline had expired and could not be reinstated, despite the activists' argument that the ruling imposing the ban had not been properly communicated, in violation of the Law on Assemblies. This law requires that court decisions concerning bans on peaceful assemblies be communicated to protest organisers and participants within 24 hours. The activists took their case further to the Supreme Court. However, on 22 July, this court upheld the earlier refusal.[56]

Blanket bans have also been implemented elsewhere in Kyrgyzstan. For example, in summer 2024 Osh City Court prohibited peaceful assemblies outside the mayor's office and in the city's central square until the end of the year, requiring all assemblies to be held in Ataturk Park instead.[57]

The human rights organisation Kylym Shami has raised concerns about the growing trend of restricting peaceful assemblies on grounds not permitted by the Law on Assemblies or international law. After analysing 50 court decisions that imposed restrictions on peaceful assemblies, the organisation found that 49 violated the Law on Assemblies. The organisation shared the analysis with the Supreme Court, requesting its assistance in ensuring that future court rulings on these matters comply with the law.[58]

International experts have also voiced concerns about the use of blanket bans on peaceful protests. After reviewing Kyrgyzstan's compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in October 2022, the UN Human Rights Committee called on the authorities to refrain from blanket restrictions on peaceful assemblies as well as from selective and discriminatory dispersals of assemblies.[59]

In another development of serious concern, activists seeking to peacefully exercise their right to freedom of assembly have been singled out for arrest and prosecution. For example, activist-blogger Aftandil Jorobekov and writer Olzhobay Shakir both faced criminal charges after announcing plans to peacefully protest against controversial government initiatives. (See more on these and other cases in the following chapter).

Recommendations

The Kyrgyzstani authorities should:

- Uphold the right to freedom of peaceful assembly as protected by national and international law.
- Refrain from imposing blanket restrictions on assemblies and put an end to the prolonged ban on protests in central areas of Bishkek.
- Ensure that citizens are not detained or penalised for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of assembly.

Persecution of activists, journalists and bloggers

Civil society activists, opposition members, journalists, bloggers, and others who criticise the authorities or speak out on issues perceived as sensitive have faced increasing intimidation and harassment, ranging from

online threats to arrests and criminal prosecution in apparent retaliation for their activities. Below, we highlight several cases of particular concern.

Temirov Live case

Eleven current and former Temirov Live journalists arrested during raids in January 2024 (see more above) were charged under a vaguely worded provision of the Criminal Code (article 278, part 3), which penalises calls for "active disobedience to the lawful demands" of representatives of authorities and for "mass riots". The arrests were linked to video reports published by Temirov Live, known for its exposés into high-level corruption. Initially all of the arrested journalists were held in pre-trial detention; later six were moved to house arrest and one released with a travel ban.[60] However, when the trial began in June 2024, four remained in custody. When the trial entered its final stage in late September 2024, prosecutors requested six-year prison sentences for all the defendants.[61]

On 10 October 2024, Leninsky District Court in Bishkek announced the verdict.[62] Makhabat Tazhibek Kyzy, Temirov Live's director, and Azamat Ishenbekov were sentenced to six and five years in prison, respectively. Tazhibek Kyzy was convicted of "organising" calls for riots, while Ishenbekov was found to have been an accomplice. Aike Beishekeyeva and Aktilek Kaparov were also sentenced to five years in prison for calling for riots, but their sentences were commuted to three years' probation. The remaining seven defendants were acquitted. On 18 December 2024, Bishkek City Court upheld the four convictions in the case.[63]

While it is a relief that some journalists in the case were acquitted, the convictions are deeply disappointing due the retaliatory nature of the charges. In a joint statement issued on the eve of the trial's final day in October 2024, Amnesty International, Article 19, Civil Rights Defenders, Frontline Defenders, IPHR, the Norwegian Helsinki Committee and five other human rights organisations called for the dismissal of the charges against the 11 journalists, stating that they were "a textbook example of retaliation against investigative journalism and reporting on high-level corruption".[64] In addition to human rights groups, international human rights experts also criticised the retaliatory nature of the charges. For example, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights called on the authorities to ensure that the cases are fully reviewed in line with international human rights standards, expressing regret that the journalists were arbitrarily detained "for simply doing their job".[65] The UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders, Mary Lawlor, also expressed concerns that the charges were in retaliation for the journalists' work and called the court ruling "a big blow" to Kyrgyzstan's reputation.[66]

When delivering the sentences, the court also ordered social services to determine the custody of Makhabat Tazhibek Kyzy's 12-year-old son due to her imprisonment and the absence of the child's father. The father, Bolot Temirov, founder of Temirov Live and Ait Ait Dese, was deported from Kyrgyzstan in 2022 after being prosecuted on spurious criminal charges and unlawfully stripped of his Kyrgyz citizenship.[67] The court order raised concerns, especially given that Temirov had previously reported that the child's birth certificate was confiscated during his wife's arrest and withheld by authorities for several months. This led him to fear that authorities might attempt to "take revenge through the child."[68] However, according to Tazhibek Kyzy's lawyer, as the child currently lives with his grandmother, there is no immediate threat of him being taken into care.[69] The court's press service also issued a statement, saying that "no one intends to take him away", and insisting that the court only required social services to "determine his place of residence".[70]

Shortly before the verdict was issued, Bolot Temirov announced that a team of lawyers had submitted a complaint to the UN Human Rights Committee in his case.[71] The detailed submission covers violations of his right to freedom of expression, freedom from arbitrary detention, a fair trial, and citizenship in connection with his 2022 prosecution and deportation. Temirov has also reported facing new criminal charges in absentia, similar to those initiated against his colleagues.[72]

Case against lawyer defending high-profile clients

The recent arrest and prosecution of a lawyer defending clients in high-profile cases is of serious concern. On 29 November 2024, officers from the State Committee for National Security (SCNS) arrested lawyer Samat Matsakov after searching his home in Bishkek and confiscating case materials related to his legal defence work.[73] A local court subsequently sanctioned his pre-trial detention for a month on charges of fraud and forgery of documents (under articles 209 – part 3, and 379 – part 3 of the Criminal Code), a period that was later extended until the end of February 2025.[74]

In a press statement issued later, the SCNS accused him of misappropriating $22,000 through judicial connections and forging documents to cover up his actions.[75]

However, the circumstances of the case suggest Matsakov was targeted for defending clients in politically sensitive cases. He has recently defended journalists in the Temirov Live case and musician-poet Askat Zhetigen (see more on these cases above and below). In addition, he has represented Imamidin Tashov, head of the KG Group construction company and a previous presidential candidate, who has alleged being tortured by SCNS officers while in detention on charges of plotting a coup.[76]

The concerns about Matsakov's case are reinforced by serious procedural violations reportedly marring the legal actions against him. These include the lack of required procedural documentation for his arrest, the search of his home and work premises without legal sanction, the confiscation of case materials unrelated to the charged against him in breach of attorney-client privilege, delays in granting him access to legal representation, and bias against the defence during the court proceedings sanctioning his pre-trial detention. In addition, when sanctioning Matsakov's pre-trial detention, the court failed to take into account mitigating factors, such as Matsakov's role as the father of three young children and his clean criminal record. [77]

Kyrgyzstan's Bar Association, as well as local human rights defenders and civil society activists have expressed serious concerns about Matsakov's arrest and prosecution, stressing the authorities' obligations to uphold the independence of the legal profession and ensure that lawyers are not subjected to interference or harassment as a result of fulfilling their professional duties.[78] International human rights NGOs have also spoken out in his support. In a joint statement issued in December 2024, IPHR, the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights and the Norwegian Helsinki Committee called on the Kyrgyzstani authorities to promptly release Matsakov and drop all charges unless they are supported by credible evidence. The NGOs stressed that the authorities should ensure that Matsakov and other defence lawyers can carry out their work duties without fear of intimidation, regardless of their clients' profiles or the charges against them.[79]

Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders Mary Lawlor also expressed concerns about Matsakov's detention in violation of procedural guarantees, stressing that lawyers "should be protected from harassment and persecution".[80]

Case against Social Democratic activists

The recent arrests of several representatives of the opposition Social Democrats party have sparked alarm amid growing government efforts to suppress political pluralism and dissent.

On 13 November 2024, police searched the party's office and detained party leader Temirlan Sultanbekov, election campaign manager Irina Karamushkina, and party member Roza Turksever. A local court ordered them to be held in pre-trial detention for two months[81], later extending the period by another month.[82] The three are accused of vote buying based on a leaked audio recording of unknown origin, in which Karamushkina purportedly discussed vote buying with a party candidate.[83] However, party members have denied the allegations, stating that the discussion concerned payments to campaigners.

Their arrest came just days before Kyrgyzstan's municipal elections on 17 November 2024, and due to the vote-buying charges, the party's candidates were disqualified from participating in the race in Bishkek.[84]

Several additional party members have been temporarily detained for questioning in the case.[85] In addition, in January 2025, party member Ermek Ermatov was sentenced to short-term detention for minor hooliganism and disobedience to law enforcement following a police raid, during which he allegedly attempted to conceal evidence related to the vote buying investigation. Police reportedly used excessive force when detaining him, causing multiple injuries, and failed to disclose his whereabouts for over a day.[86]

Sultanbekov has held an extended hunger strike in protest of his arrest, only drinking water and juice, resulting in a serious decline in his health. The Penitentiary Service has claimed that the politician's condition is "stable and satisfactory". However, a doctor examining him in mid-January 2025 found serious symptoms including joint immobility, hand tremors, arrhythmia, chest pain, and dizziness. She concluded that continuing his two-month hunger strike "poses a severe risk of coma, hypoglycemia, and irreversible organ damage, potentially leading to death." [87]

The Social Democrats have dismissed the criminal case against Sultanbekov and his colleagues as politically motivated and unfounded. Alongside party members and civil society representatives, international actors have also criticised the case. In particular, in its 19 December 2024 resolution, the European Parliament denounced the "dubious reasons" for their detention and the "possible political motivation" behind the criminal case. [88] The resolution called for their release, respect for their due process rights, and ensuring Sultanbekov's safety and well-being. The resolution drew attention at the highest political level in Kyrgyzstan, prompting President Japarov to publicly assert that it was issued "without evidence" and to accuse the Parliament of "interfering" in the country's internal affairs.[89] UN special procedures are also looking into the case. [90]

The Social Democrats are a successor group of the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (SDPK), a previously leading political force in the country that was co-founded by former President Almazbek Atambayev in 1993. SDKP ceased to exist following a 2020 split.[91]

Kempir-Abad case

Over two dozen activists, bloggers, and political figures were arrested in October 2022 and charged with instigating mass unrest and attempting to seize power after peacefully opposing a government-negotiated border deal with neighbouring Uzbekistan concerning the Kempir-Abad water reservoir.[92] Their pre-trial detention was repeatedly extended in violation of international standards, resulting in the defendants spending months in unsanitary conditions, with limited access to medical treatment and family visits. While some of them were eventually moved to house arrest due to health issues, others spent over 19 months in pre-trial detention. Following a closed-door trial marred by serious due process violations, the prosecutor requested 20-year prison sentences for 22 defendants, despite a lack of credible evidence to support the charges.[93]

In a welcome development, on 14 June 2024, all 22 defendants on trial were acquitted, including prominent activists Klara Sooronkulova and Rita Karasartova. This was a victory for justice and the rule of law in the country. However, prosecutors subsequently appealed the ruling after President Japarov publicly commented on the case, stating he "would have imposed some kind of punishment" if he were the judge.[94] Prosecutors requested that the acquittals be overturned and the defendants found guilty.[95] The hearings in the appeal process have repeatedly been postponed and were still under way at the time of writing.[96] Moreover, the cases of additional defendants in the Kempir-Abad case are reportedly considered separately. However, no additional information about the proceedings in these cases is available at the time of writing.

Cases initiated over social media posts

In an alarming trend, a growing number of activists, bloggers and journalists have faced criminal charges initiated over social media posts. These charges have often been opened under broadly worded provisions of the Criminal Code, which do not clearly define the offenses set out, such as article 278, part 3, which prohibits calls for "disobedience to the lawful demands" of authorities and for riots and article 330, which penalises "incitement" to ethnic, national and other hatred. It is of further concern that charges are often primarily based on conclusions from state experts, who are engaged by security services or police to assess the nature of social media posts and routinely conclude that the analysed posts contain unlawful content.[97] A former employee of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) has testified about the practice of preparing expert reviews dictated by security services in such cases. Following his exposure, he was himself criminally prosecuted (see more below).

These are recent examples of cases initiated over social media posts under Criminal Code 278, part 3:

- Writer Olzhobay Shakir was arrested in September 2023 because of "provocative" social media posts. He has repeatedly criticised authorities and was arrested shortly after announcing plans to peacefully rally against a government initiative regarding Soviet-era property – the transfer of four

resort centres located near Issyk-Kul Lake to Uzbekistan.[98] In May 2024, he was sentenced to five years' imprisonment, a ruling that was upheld on appeal by a regional court.[99] However, in early October 2024, the Supreme Court replaced his prison sentence with three years of probation, while still upholding his conviction. As a result, he was released after spending more than a year behind bars.[100]

- Blogger Zarina Torokulova was sentenced to five years in prison in January 2024 after being accused of "systematically" posting "provocative" content on social media. Prior to her arrest, she had shared Olzhobay Shakir's post announcing plans to hold a peaceful protest (see the previous case). Torokulova was initially released on probation. However, in April 2024, this decision was overturned on appeal and her prison sentence reinstated.[101] In late October 2024, she was reportedly placed in solitary confinement for 15 days due to alleged misbehaviour in prison. Her daughter expressed concerns about her well-being in solitary confinement given her heart problems.[102] Moreover, in December 2024, Torokulova was reportedly transferred to a stricter prison regime after prison authorities identified her as a "persistent violator of prison regulations". [103]This information further reinforced concerns about her well-being in prison.

- Blogger Adilet Ali Myktybek (also known as Adilet Baltabay) was sentenced to five years in prison in November 2022 because of Facebook posts deemed to contain calls for "disobedience" and riots. However, his sentence was reduced to three years' probation, a ruling later upheld by the Supreme Court, after a regional appeal court briefly sent him to prison.[104] In his posts Mykytbek had spoken out on different government initiatives, e.g., regarding the legalisation of casinos, the extraction of natural resources, and plans for the construction of a new presidential residence.

- Blogger-activist Aftandil Jorobekov was arrested and charged in December 2023 after publicly opposing a controversial government initiative to change the country's flag, an initiative that sparked a public backlash.[105] His arrest came after he posted a video on Facebook in which he criticised the proposal for the new flag and said that he was planning to hold a peaceful protest against it.[106] His trial started in February 2024 but was suspended the following month pending additional expert assessments. In June 2024, he was moved to house arrest.[107] On 31 October 2024, a Bishkek court convicted Jorobekov – not on the initial charges brought against him (under Criminal Code article 278, part 3), but on charges of publicly calling for the forceful seizure of power in media or communication networks (article 327, part 2). These charges have also repeatedly been used against government critics. The court ordered him to pay a fine of 70,000 Som (some 750 EUR).[108]

- Academic-whistleblower Zhoomart Karabaev was arrested in July 2024 after publishing social media posts alleging that the NAS has provided expert reviews dictated by security services in cases involving government critics. A former NAS employee, Karabaev also testified on this issue during Olzhobay Shakir's trial (see above).[109] In September 2024, Karabaev alleged that a security service official had threatened him in detention, including by threatening to strangle him. Following this, the Ombudsperson requested relevant state bodies to investigate Karabaev's allegations and ensure his protection.[110] Prosecutors opened an investigation into the allegations, but in January 2025, a local court faulted them for the lack of effective action.[111] The trial in Karabaev's case began in October 2024.[112] The same month, the court hearing the case granted his request to be released pending further proceedings due to his mother's hospitalisation. As a result, his pre-trial detention

was replaced with a restriction on leaving his place of residence.[113] At the time of writing, the trial is still under way.

- Musician-poet **Askat Zhetigen** was arrested in March 2024 after publishing a social media appeal critically assessing a media interview with President Japarov, during which he resorted to swearing. Prior to this, he had publicly criticised various government policies, including the initiative to change the country's flag and the arrest of government critics.[114] Zhetigen was charged both with calling for disobedience to authorities (under Criminal Code article 278, part 3) and calling for the forceful seizure of power (under article 327, part 2). In July 2024, he was convicted of the second charge and sentenced to three years in prison.[115] He alleged being subjected to ill-treatment in pre-trial detention.[116] In October 2024, Bishkek City Court upheld Zhetigen's sentence.[117]

The following cases illustrate the misuse of Criminal Code article 330 to restrict free speech:

- In June 2024, human rights activist **Ondurush Toktonasyrov** was fined the equivalent of around 1000 EUR for Facebook posts allegedly inciting national hatred and offending national values.[118] Toktonasyrov and his colleagues considered the charges to be baseless, viewing them as retaliation for his civic engagement, including social media posts and peaceful protests on politically sensitive issues like the persecution of government critics and Russia's war against Ukraine.[119]

- In September 2022, journalist **Taalaibek Duishenbiev** was convicted of inciting national hatred because of a social media repost of a Ukrainian piece concerning Kyrgyzstan's alleged readiness to support Russia's war in Ukraine. He was given a five-year prison sentence, which was commuted to three years' probation. Human rights groups denounced the fact that he was held responsible for his outlet's publication of a newsworthy statement.[120]

- Journalist **Bayan Jumagulova**, who previously worked for the local RFE/RL service but is now retired and lives abroad, reported being summoned for questioning by police about her Facebook posts when visiting Kyrgyzstan in June 2024. She learned that her social media activities had been under surveillance for a long time and a criminal case had been opened against her for allegedly inciting hatred. She was reportedly banned from leaving the country pending the investigation. The trial in her case began in September 2024.[121] At the time of writing, no additional information about the status of the legal proceedings was available.

- Activist-blogger **Kanykei Aranova**, known for her criticism of the authorities, was charged with "inciting" hatred and calling for the violent seizure of power (Criminal Code articles 330 and 327) over Facebook posts she claims were from a fake account. Investigators from the Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) confirmed the account was initially under a different name, with several posts edited after it was changed to Aranova's. These posts criticised President Japarov and called for a change of power. The account is no longer accessible.[122] Aranova was extradited from Russia in February 2024, and thereafter convicted and fined 120,000 soms (about 1300 EUR).[123] However, after prosecutors appealed, her sentence was changed to 3.5 years in prison in June 2024, a ruling upheld by the Supreme Court.[124]

The cases described above are far from all in which people have been charged over social media posts. For example, a recent study conducted by Kloop showed that over 50 criminal cases have been initiated because of social media posts critical of authorities since 2020, when President Japarov came to power.[125] According to human rights defenders, in 2024 alone, more than 70 cases were submitted to court under Criminal Code articles 278, part 3 (calls for disobedience to authorities and riots), 330 (incitement to hatred) and 327 (public calls for the forceful seizure of power) – the provisions commonly applied to individuals prosecuted for critical social media posts.[126] These figures underscore concerns about the systematic use of such charges to suppress dissent.

Transnational repression

The government's persecution of critics has extended beyond the country's borders. In a recent case, civil society activist Tilekmat Kudaibergen uulu (also known as Tilekmat Kurenov) faces extradition from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on spurious charges. While the request is still under consideration at the time of writing, he remains unable to leave the UAE, where he travelled in November 2024 for a meeting with fellow activists.

Kudaibergen uulu previously fled Kyrgyzstan for the United States in 2022, fearing further persecution after serving an 18-month prison sentence issued after he protested against a controversial constitutional reform initiated by President Japarov. He reported being subjected to physical and psychological torture in detention.

IPHR, together with Freedom for Eurasia, Freedom Now, and the Norwegian Helsinki Committee, has urged UAE authorities to uphold the ban on refoulement and refrain from forcibly returning him to Kyrgyzstan. [127]

Recommendations

The Kyrgyzstani authorities should:

- Put an end to intimidation and harassment of civil society activists, opposition supporters, lawyers, journalists, bloggers and other individuals because of their peaceful and legitimate activities. In particular, they should drop the charges against anyone who has been prosecuted on these grounds and immediately release those arbitrarily detained, including in the cases described above.
- Safeguard the well-being of activists, lawyers, journalists and bloggers in detention, and promptly and impartially investigate any allegations of ill-treatment with a view to holding those responsible to account.
- Uphold the independence of the legal profession and ensure that lawyers are not subjected to intimidation and harassment because of their professional activities, including their defence of clients in high-profile clients.
- Revise articles 278, part 3 and 330 of the Criminal Code to ensure that they are clearly and unambiguously worded and cannot be implemented to unduly restrict freedom of expression in violation of international standards.
- Stop charging and convicting activists-bloggers for social media posts deemed unlawful based on questionable expert conclusions.

- Refrain from misusing international policing measures to request the extradition of government critics on politically motivated charges.

[1] https://monitor.civicus.org/globalfindings_2023/
[2] See: https://monitor.civicus.org/country/kyrgyzstan/
[3] https://iphronline.org/countries/kyrgyzstan/
[4] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2024-0073_EN.html
[5] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0290_EN.html
[6] Japarov's comments were posted at: https://www.facebook.com/japarov.sadyr/posts/pfbid02HxLEfMMiTVaJsSuJEWt53meVggkr9vKRkhDex6c5dSULb5ziLS76e9ftHCgrWh1Ll?locale=ru_RU
[7] See the following joint appeals by IPHR and partners: https://iphronline.org/articles/ngo-appeal-to-the-eu-defend-civil-society-in-kyrgyzstan-against-repressive-draft-law/; https://iphronline.org/articles/kyrgyzstan-civil-society-organisations-call-on-president-to-veto-law-on-foreign-representatives/
[8] The text of the law is available at: https://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/4-5321/edition/6031/ru
[9] The implementing rules are available at:
[10] https://economist.kg/novosti/2024/09/05/kabmin-kyrghyzstana-utvierdil-poriadok-viedieniia-rieiestra-inostrannykh-nko/
[11] See more in the following report: https://24.kg/obschestvo/314532_reestr_minyusta_inostrannyih_agentov_popolnilsya_esche_dvumya_organizatsiyami/
[12] The registry has been made publicly available at: https://nko.minjust.gov.kg/ru but access appeared limited.
[13] See, for example, comments made by Deputy Chair of the Cabinet of Ministers, Edil Baisalov during a meeting with NGOs in April 2024: https://24.kg/vlast/292807_nikakih_presledovaniy_iogranicheniy_vdeyatelnosti_nko_nebudet_edil_baysalov/
[14] See media report on his speech from 21 December 2024: https://www.vb.kg/doc/441652_sadyr_japarov:_smi_zaiavliaushie_o_nehvatke_svobody_sami_ee_lisheny.html
[15] See https://24.kg/vlast/316948/
[16] See Bir Duino press release from 26 September 2024: https://birduino.kg/en/press/judicial-proceedings-in-defense-of-the-constitutional-right-to-freedom-of-association-and-the-exercise-by-citizens-of-the-right-to-participate-in-the-management-of-the-affairs-of-society-and-the-state
[17] See more in Bir Duino press release from 16 January 2025: https://birduino.kg/en/press/the-administrative-court-of-bishkek-has-considered-the-administrative-claim-of-bir-duino-kyrgyzstan-against-the-resolution-of-the-cabinet-of-ministers-of-the-kyrgyz-republic-(on-foreign-representatives)
[18] The opinion is available at: https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2024)033-e
[19] The initial draft is available at: https://www.gov.kg/ru/npa/s/4192
[20] See Kaktus media article from 7 May 2024: https://kaktus.media/doc/500878_prezident_prodlil_sroki_dorabotki_zakona_o_nepravitelstvennyh_organizaciiah.html
[21] For more information on the initial draft law, proposed by the presidential administration, see the following statement by IPHR and CIVICUS: https://iphronline.org/articles/kyrgyzstan-withdraw-draft-law-threatening-ngos/
[22] See more in interview with Abdurasulova published by Radio Azzatyk, 30 December 2024, https://rus.azattyk.org/a/pravozaschitnitsa-aziza-abdirasulova-podtverdila-chto-pokinula-kyrgyzstan/33257574.html
[23] See more in the following media report: https://24.kg/obschestvo/315681_pravozaschitnitsa_aziza_abdirasulova_pokinula_kyirgyizstan/
[24] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1078202057439842&rdid=JoS6v65AvrfzYOz8
[25] See more on his case and death in IPHR statement from July 2020: https://iphronline.org/articles/a-tragedy-beyond-words-human-rights-defender-azimjan-askarov-dies-in-prison-in-kyrgyzstan/
[26] Lawlor's statement was published on x, for a repost see: https://24.kg/obschestvo/316837_spetsdokladchik_oon_prizvala_vlasti_kyirgyizstana_nepresledovat_azizu_abdirasulovu/
[27] See more in joint NGO statement: https://iphronline.org/articles/kyrgyzstan-charges-raids-against-independent-media/
[28] For more information, see update https://iphronline.org/articles/kyrgyzstan-civic-space-deteriorates-further-as-foreign-agent-style-ngo-law-is-adopted-and-media-crackdown-widens/
[29] For more information, see update https://iphronline.org/articles/kyrgyzstan-civic-space-deteriorates-further-as-foreign-agent-style-ngo-law-is-adopted-and-media-crackdown-widens/, and joint statement: https://iphronline.org/articles/kyrgyzstan-stop-pressuring-leading-independent-news-portal-withdraw-lawsuit-to-shut-it-down/
[30] See Kloop statement from 29 August 2024: https://kloop.kg/blog/2024/08/29/kloop-media-uzhe-tochno-likvidiruyut-verhovnyj-sud-molchal-ob-etom-bolshe-mesyatsa-no-my-prodolzhaem-rabotat/
[31] See Kloop article from 3 September 2024 about comments made by Japarov in interview with state information agency Kabar: https://kloop.kg/blog/2024/09/03/sadyr-zhaparov-likvidatsiya-kloop-media-nikak-ne-povliyaet-na-svobodu-slova-v-kyrgyzstane/

[32] Available at: https://iphronline.org/articles/kyrgyzstan-overturn-decision-to-liquidate-kloop-media/
[33] See Facebook post by presidential press secretary Askat Algozov: https://www.facebook.com/askat.alagozov/posts/8099897236745113
[34] Posted at https://knews.kg/2024/06/28/minkultury-kyrgyzstana-vyneslo-na-obsuzhdenie-novuyu-versiyu-zakonoproekta-o-smi-tekst/
[35] See more in 24.kg article: https://24.kg/obschestvo/297898/
[36] The revised version is available at: https://kenesh.kg/bills/661454
[37] For more information on this law, see joint submission to UN Human Rights Committee: https://www.iphronline.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/IPHR-LPF-CIVICUS-submission-on-Kyrgyzstan-September-2022.pdf
[38] For examples, see https://www.iphronline.org/kyrgyzstan-widening-campaign-against-false-information.html
[39] See Facebook post by Novie Litsa's chief editor: https://www.facebook.com/leila.saralaeva/posts/pfbid02XoSacn4BsamrZmhaCbLHpnD8zbmQZkKEuQnjxhyXKToJDLcVo8GjAvvdDxbVtePKl
[40] https://www.facebook.com/askat.alagozov/posts/8099897236745113
[41] For more information, see the following RFE/RL articles: https://rus.azattyk.org/a/33084286.html
[42] See 24.kg article from 26 August 2024: https://24.kg/vlast/303091_shtrafyi_do200_tyisyach_somov_vjogorku_kenesh_postupil_proekt_zakona_oklevete/
[43] For more information, see update https://iphronline.org/articles/kyrgyzstan-civic-space-deteriorates-further-as-foreign-agent-style-ngo-law-is-adopted-and-media-crackdown-widens/
[44] The opinion, issued in June 2024, is available at: https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2024)025-e
[45] See statement issued by the Ombudsperson on 27 September 2024: https://ombudsman.kg/ru/publications/akyykatchy-prizvala-otozvat-popravki-o-shtrafnyh-sankciyah-za-klevetu-i-oskorblenie
[46] See more in Deutsche Welle article from 19 December 2024: https://www.dw.com/ru/strafy-za-klevetu-zacem-kyrgyzstanu-ese-odin-spornyj-zakon/a-71111734
[47] https://kloop.kg/blog/2025/01/31/v-kyrgyzstane-budut-shtrafovat-za-oskorbleniya-i-klevetu-v-internete/
[48] See summary of Media Policy Institute findings in the following article: https://kaktus.media/doc/511743_uristy_imp_prizyvaut_depytatov_otozvat_proekt_o_zaprete_na_semky_sotrydnikov_milicii.html
[49] https://rus.azattyk.org/a/33222385.html
[50] https://kaktus.media/doc/514952_jogorky_kenesh_otklonil_zakon_o_zaprete_na_videosemky_sotrydnikov_milicii.html
[51] https://24.kg/vlast/314476_zakon_neprinyat_nomilitsioneryi_uje_zapreschayut_sebya_snimat_navideo_deputat/
[52] See more in briefing paper from November 2023: https://www.iphronline.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/IPHR-LPF-briefing-paper-for-EU-Kyrgyzstan-HR-Dialogue-2023.pdf
[53] Proposed amendments to the Criminal Code and several other laws on countering extremist activities, published for public consultation in October 2024 at https://koomtalkuu.gov.kg/ru/view-npa/4276
[54] https://kloop.kg/blog/2025/01/08/zapret-na-mitingi-v-tsentre-bishkeka-prodlili-do-kontsa-marta/
[55] For examples, see briefing paper from November 2023: https://www.iphronline.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/IPHR-LPF-briefing-paper-for-EU-Kyrgyzstan-HR-Dialogue-2023.pdf
[56] See more at: https://bishkeksmog.info/2024/07/21/verhovniy_sud/
[57] See Kaktus article from 23 June 2024: https://kaktus.media/doc/505652_v_centre_osha_do_konca_goda_zapretili_provodit_mitingi.html
[58] See more in RFE/RL article from 25 July 2024: https://rus.azattyk.org/a/33050471.html
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