



## INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM RESEARCH

A Centre of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

### CENTRAL ASIA

### WEEKLY REPORT

**15 - 21 August 2011**

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#### **Kazakhstan**

On 16 August 2011 an imprisoned journalist was refused parole despite existing Kazakh law that a prisoner can be released conditionally after serving a third of his sentence. He was previously sentenced to three years in jail on charges of publishing state secrets- he wrote an article that featured private correspondence from the chief of the National Security Committee. He is also known for writing articles that have criticized the government in the past, leading to widespread belief that his arrest and detention was made with political motivations.<sup>1</sup>

On 19 August 2011 a court in Kazakhstan announced its intention to block a number of websites that allegedly serve as incubation grounds for extremist ideology.<sup>2</sup> This includes the popular blogging platform LiveJournal, which was earlier blocked in 2008 after blogs containing scathing critiques of the government were found. The Kazakh government is sensitive to the birth of extremist ideology and political dissent, and is known for its tight media control.

#### **Kyrgyzstan**

There is still evidence of resentment of the violent military crackdown during the April 2010 political protests in Bishkek. On 15 August 2011, several hundred protesters contested the decision to transfer former Defense Minister Vaktybek Kalyev from a detention centre to house arrest. The protesters blocked the entrance to the national assembly building and physically assaulted parliament members as they entered the premises.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Reporters Without Borders, News Website, *Imprisoned Journalist Parole Request Again Rejected*, 17 August 2011, Accessed at [http://en.rsf.org/spip.php?page=article&id\\_article=39597](http://en.rsf.org/spip.php?page=article&id_article=39597)

<sup>2</sup> Reuters, News Website, *Kazakhstan Blocks 'Extremist' News Websites*, 19 August 2011, Accessed at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/08/19/us-kazakhstan-internet-idUSTRE7714C820110819>

<sup>3</sup> Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, News Website, *Kyrgyz Protesters Attack Lawmakers, Disrupt Parliament Session*, 15 August 2011

[http://www.rferl.org/content/kyrgyz\\_protesters\\_attack\\_lawmakers\\_disrupt\\_parliament/24297307.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/kyrgyz_protesters_attack_lawmakers_disrupt_parliament/24297307.html)

On 21 August 2011, three journalists covering demonstrations in support of parliamentarians Kamchybek Tashiyev and Zhyldyzkan Dzholdoshova were attacked by unidentified assailants. The attacks took place in full view of security forces who did not intervene.<sup>4</sup> On 15 August 2011, another journalist, Shokhrukh Saipov, was severely injured after suffering an attack in Osh.<sup>5</sup> Violence against journalists appears to be a common phenomenon in Kyrgyzstan, and the ones attacked are often those who cover sensitive issues within the country. Saipov has a website which focuses on the lives and injustices dealt against ethnic Uzbeks in the country, while the three journalists were reporting on two members of the Ata Zhurt political party, which was also targeted by violence.

There are allegations that the government and security forces are not willing to help these journalists even if the attacks against them are on the rise. Saipov was denied medical treatment at a hospital despite his injuries.

### **Tajikistan**

On 16 August 2011, Urunboy Usmonov, a detained BBC journalist has gone on trial for alleged contact with Hizbut – Tahrir, a banned Islamic Group. He told a court that he was tortured after getting detained by Tajik authorities and forced to sign a confession. The BBC has asked Tajik authorities to drop all charges against him.<sup>6</sup>

### **Turkmenistan**

The Turkmen government has begun trying suspects related to the Abadan arms depot explosion. A closed trial is currently underway and there are reports that those held responsible will be given 20 to 25 year prison sentences.<sup>7</sup> The government has remained largely reticent about the incident, having made no statements regarding the death toll or the trial outcomes. Unconfirmed reports of further death in the region have surfaced as well, with 8 more reportedly dying from exploding shrapnel still scattered around the vicinity.

Turkmenistan's President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov has declared satellite dishes unsightly for Ashgabat's cityscape, and has since ordered the removal of satellite dishes from apartment blocks.<sup>8</sup> This move may restrict viewer access to foreign channels, and has been speculated as part of state measures to further increase control over the media.

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<sup>4</sup> Reporters without borders, News Website, *Three TV Journalists attacked in Osh in latest violence against media*, 21 August 2011, Accessed at

[http://defenders.ucoz.com/news/kyrgyzstan\\_three\\_tv\\_journalists\\_attacked\\_in\\_osh\\_in\\_latest\\_violence\\_against\\_media/2011-06-21-512](http://defenders.ucoz.com/news/kyrgyzstan_three_tv_journalists_attacked_in_osh_in_latest_violence_against_media/2011-06-21-512)

<sup>5</sup> Committee to Protect Journalists, Activist Website, *Independent Journalist Brutally Attacked in Kyrgyzstan*, 15 August 2011, Accessed at <http://www.cpi.org/2011/08/independent-journalist-brutally-attacked-in-kyrgyz.php>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/greenslade/2011/aug/19/journalist-safety-tajikistan>

<sup>7</sup> Eurasianet.org, News Website, *Turkmenistan: 40 Tried for Abadan Explosion*, 16 August 2011, Accessed at <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/64048>

<sup>8</sup> The Moscow Times, News Website, *Turkmen Leader Bans Satellite Dishes*, 18 August 2011, Accessed at <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/turkmen-leader-bans-satellite-dishes/442236.html>

## Uzbekistan

Two human rights activists were detained and both accused Uzbekistan police forces of abuse. On 15 August 2011, Saida Kurbanova said she was summoned to a police station. She claimed that she was roughly handled and released only after several hours. This was apparently in response to an article she wrote in March criticizing the government for mandating the usage of state-issued bank cards to make cash transactions.<sup>9</sup> Elena Urlaeva was detained in a police station on 18 August 2011 and she claimed that she was beaten up by police after she arrived at Namangan to protest a decision by authorities to charge three local television journalists with extortion. She had made previous allegations that that she was jailed, beaten, and forcibly admitted to a psychiatric hospital.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Index on Censorship, News Website, *Uzbekistan: Activist detained over article critical of bank cards system*, 16 August 2011, Accessed at: <http://www.indexoncensorship.org/2011/08/uzbekistan-activist-detained-over-article-critical-of-bank-cards-system/>

<sup>10</sup> Eurasia Lift, News Website, *Uzbekistan: Rights Defender Urlaeva Detained, Beaten*, 21 August 2011, Accessed at <http://eurasialift.wordpress.com/2011/08/21/uzbekistan-rights-defender-urlaeva-detained-beaten/>