

**KYRGYZSTAN: POLITICAL  
DEVELOPMENTS**

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## GENERAL INFORMATION

Kyrgyzstan, or the Kyrgyz Republic (Kirgiziia in Russian), is a small mountainous country in Central Asia with a population of 4.8 million people in 1989, of which native Kyrgyzs comprised 52.4 percent , Russians 18 percent , Uzbeks 12.9 percent, Ukrainians 2.5 percent , Germans 2.4 percent, and others 11.8 per cent.<sup>1</sup> The official language is Kyrgyz, which belongs to the Turkic group of languages. It is related to Kazakh, Uzbek and Turkmen as well as Tatar, Turkish, Azeri and some other languages. Russian was made the second official language in December 2001, but only as a temporary measure. Most Kyrgyzs are Muslims, while the majority of Russians and other migrant nations are Christians of different denominations. During recent years, the number of Russians, Ukrainians, Crimean Tatars and other minorities decreased dramatically - in 1999, 64.9 percent of the population were Kyrgyzs, 13.8 percent were Uzbeks, 12.5 percent were Russians, 1.1 percent were Dungans (ethnic Chinese Muslims), 1 percent were Uighurs; 0.9 percent were Tatars, and 0.4 percent were Germans.

According to the 2009 Census, there were 14.3 percent Uzbeks, 7.8 percent Russians, 1.1 percent Dungans, 0.8-0.9 percent Turks, Uighurs, 0.4 – 0.6 percent Ukrainians, Tatars and Kazakhs and 1.7 percent other nationalities, living in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>2</sup> No more censuses were conducted in Kyrgyzstan since that time.

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<sup>1</sup> CIA, The World Factbook 2002 ([www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov))

<sup>2</sup> Population and Housing Census of the Kyrgyz Republic of 2009, National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/census/2010\\_phc/Kyrgyzstan/A5-2PopulationAndHousingCensusOfTheKyrgyzRepublicOf2009.pdf](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/census/2010_phc/Kyrgyzstan/A5-2PopulationAndHousingCensusOfTheKyrgyzRepublicOf2009.pdf)

Great significance in the social life of Kyrgyzs is held by the historical subdivision into clan or *wings*. There are three big groups of them - right or *ong*, left or *sol*, and *ichkilik*, which is neither. The clan system is still a significant factor in the distribution of power in the country.

It is a small, poor, mountainous country with a predominantly agricultural economy. Its GDP did not exceed \$1200 per capita in 2017, and economic growth, that had begun in the mid-1990s, was stopped by insufficient privatization and restructuring, a Soviet-era banking system, and rampant corruption.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Nomadic Kyrgyz tribes originally inhabited the territories of Northern Mongolia according to Chinese records of about 2000 B.C. As a result of numerous migrations and assimilation of other tribes, they occupied the territories of modern Kyrgyzstan and formed the first state, Kyrgyz Khanate, that existed from the sixth to thirteenth century A.D. After a long chain of invasions - by Mongols in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, by Kalmyks in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and then by Manchus and Uzbeks - Kyrgyz territories were annexed by the Russian Empire in 1876. A large number of Russian and Ukrainian settlers moved into the northern part of present-day Kyrgyzstan.<sup>3</sup> The Kyrgyz nomads suffered from confiscation of their land for Russian and Ukrainian settlements, taxation, forced labor and price policies. In 1916 a bloody rebellion cost more than 4000 people their lives, and forced one third of Kyrgyz to flee to China.

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<sup>3</sup> Narody Rossii. Entsiklopediia. Moskva: Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia, 1994, p. 192.

After a short period of independence that followed the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, the territories of present Kyrgyzstan became a part of the Soviet Union: first as an Autonomous Republic, and then in 1936 it received the status of a full republic.<sup>4</sup>

The Kyrgyzs were forced to make a gigantic leap from tribal feudalism to industrial socialism when Kyrgyzstan became a part of the Soviet Union. The majority of Kyrgyzs continued a nomadic lifestyle until the Soviet campaigns of forcible collectivization that cost many lives, and forced them first into transitional settlements and then into cities and towns or state and collective farms in the 1930s. But the old traditions, like the subdivision of Kyrgyz society into clans and large family groups has always been strong and played a significant role in the political, economical and social life of the country. The modern Kyrgyzs still apply great significance to family and clan origins.

Subdivision of Kyrgyz society into clans determines many aspects of social and even political life of the country. The Buguu warrior clan provided the first administrators of the Kyrgyz Republic under the Soviet Union; when the purges of Stalin eradicated their leaders in the 1930s, their place was taken by a second northern warrior clan, the Sarybagysh, who have provided most Kyrgyz leaders since that time, including the former President of Kyrgyzstan Askar Akayev.

## **POLITICAL SYSTEM**

The political system is unbalanced, with the executive branch being the strongest

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<sup>4</sup> Larry V. Clark From World Book Online © 2000 World Book, Inc.

and reinforced with special powers assumed by the President's office. Numerous political groups appeared in the early 1990s, but there is still no organized party system.

Integration into the international community is very limited, and Russia, along with some other former Soviet Union republics, remains the country's main economic and political partner. Different human rights organizations' reports state various violations, prosecutions of minorities, and oppression of mass media.

## MAP OF KYRGYZSTAN



After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan appeared to be one of the most democratic, and reform-oriented, of all the newly-formed states. However, in the mid-1990s, President Akayev turned away from his democratic course and tried to gain control over mass media and the political apparatus, and the changes that had already

been made appeared to be insufficient to maintain democracy. He was trying to build a state structure completely dependent and subordinate to the President. On the other hand, he wanted to take additional power in a way that the international community (and especially his Western allies) would not notice, because that would stop the flow of financial aid and investments in the country's economy.

Despite the constitutional limitations, President Akayev dominated the Government. Due to this political system, the executive branch also dominated the judiciary, and the Government used judicial proceedings against prominent political opposition and independent media figures in numerous instances. Law enforcement agencies appear to be under the general control of the Government. Members of the security forces at times tortured, beat, and otherwise mistreated persons and committed other human rights abuses.

One of the most notorious cases was the killing of six people committed by Kyrgyz police in March 2002 in the province of Ak-Syi during an opposition protest rally. Five of the oppositionists were killed on the spot, and the sixth died the next day in a hospital. A few days after that incident, people were outraged by the negligence of the authorities to such obvious violence, and started setting fire to the houses of the police officers and the buildings of the local administration.<sup>5</sup> Only after that, the government fulfilled the demands of the protesters: released the opposition leaders from the imprisonment and changed local administration. The government still doesn't take responsibility for those deaths, saying that they were provoked by the demonstrators themselves. Numerous evidence of the witnesses were disregarded and absolutely absurd

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<sup>5</sup> Sergei Blagov Deadly Kyrgyz riots indicative of Eurasian tensions Asia Times Online March 21, 2001 (<http://www.atimes.com/c-asia/c-asia.html>)

explanations of the police actions were given; for example, the fact that the police fired lead bullets instead of rubber, or using tear gas, is due to the lack of the latter because of the dire economic straits.<sup>6</sup> There is no progress in the investigation of the cases.

The state of their human rights record remains poor. The government limited citizens' ability to change their government. In 2000, serious irregularities marred parliamentary and presidential elections. Even before the parliamentary elections in February 2000, the OSCE observers issued a statement pointing out various violations of the election code<sup>7</sup>. The U.S. State Department echoed the OSCE's assessment of Kyrgyzstan's election, regretting the setback to Kyrgyzstan's democratic process. In mid-April of 2000, Secretary of State Albright traveled to Central Asia, where she visited Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. In Bishkek, Albright openly called for Feliks Kulov's (one of the opposition leaders, former vice-president of Kyrgyzstan) release pending his trial, and won Akayev's agreement to implement the observer's recommendations for improving the electoral process before the presidential election<sup>8</sup>. Feliks Kulov and his "Ar-Namys" ("Dignity") party were in opposition to the Akayev's regime and underwent political persecution at the hands of the state apparatus, including the Committee on National Security (KNB).

Albright's attempt was in vain. Presidential elections of October 29, 2000, "failed to comply with OSCE commitments for democratic elections" concluded the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR). "In particular, the international standards for equal, free, fair, and accountable elections were not met. This

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<sup>6</sup> Kyrgyzstan Committee for Human Rights News March 18, 2003 (<http://www.kchr.elcat.kg/index.htm>)

<sup>7</sup> CSCE Digest Volume 23, Numbers 2,3,4 February-April 2000

<sup>8</sup> CSCE Digest Volume 23, Numbers 2,3,4 February-April 2000.

election did not reverse the negative trends identified during the recent parliamentary elections, instead undermining some of its positive features. Democratic development in the Kyrgyz Republic still remains... challenged” - indicates the statement of the preliminary findings and conclusions of OSCE/ODIHR.

Prison conditions remained very poor, and there were many cases of arbitrary arrest and detention. For example, on February the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2003, the members of the Bishkek City public referendum monitoring staff were arrested during a visit to a voting area. This was followed by the alleged beating and incommunicado detention of the deputy head of the staff, J. Jeksheev.

Executive domination of the judiciary limited citizens’ right to due process. Executive branch interference affected verdicts involving prominent opposition figures. The government has restricted some privacy rights. The government restricted freedom of speech and of the press. The government used bureaucratic means to harass and pressure the independent media, some nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the opposition. The government restricted freedom of assembly and freedom of association. The government harassed and pressured some human rights groups. Violence and discrimination against women have been problems. Child abuse has been a problem, and there are growing numbers of street children. Discrimination against ethnic minorities continues to be a problem.

The Tulip Revolution in February - March 2005 was a great hope for many that Kyrgyzstan would return to democracy. President Akayev was ousted and replaced by Kurmanbek Bakiev. The new president promised a wide range of reforms and changes in the country. However, the reality was different. The sprouts of democracy were being cut

by the government. For example, the government suppressed a rally of the opposition in November 2007.<sup>9</sup> Another example was a threat of the Bishkek prosecutor who warned he would crack down on publications that criticize the country's president. Corruption and nationalism continued to play a very important role in society and in the government. It reflected negatively on the situation with ethnic and religious minorities.<sup>10</sup>

Human rights did not improve under the new government. Politically-motivated killings, like the killing of a member of Parliament Jyrgalbek Surabaldiyev on June 10, 2005, abuse of power, and widespread political corruption as well as the limitations of freedom of press and media continued to be major features of the Kyrgyz state.<sup>11</sup>

Feliks Kulov, who was freed from prison and elevated to the position of Prime Minister, resigned in December 2006 due to his disagreement with the anti-democratic policy of the new Kyrgyz government and returned to the opposition with his Ar-Namys party. The split went through political and subethnic lines, i.e. the territorial factor is certainly present in the confrontation between the powers-that-be and the opposition. Citizens of Kyrgyzstan are informally divided by tradition into Southerners and Northerners. Bakiev himself is from the south, Kulov from the north. A new round of struggle began.

Disenchantment with the 2005 Tulip Revolution, and the absence of competent political leadership once again brought the country to the edge of becoming a failed state.

The April 2010 riots, which resulted in the ousting President Bakiev and the creation of

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<sup>9</sup> Casualties Reported as Police Use Tear Gas to Dissolve Opposition Protesters in Kyrgyzstan. Mosnewscom, November 7, 2006 <http://www.mosnews.com/news/2006/11/07/kyrgyzupdate.shtml>

<sup>10</sup> Leila Saralaeva. Press Freedom Fears in Kyrgyzstan: Journalists face libel action for criticizing Kurmanbek Bakiev. 23 January, 2006. [http://www.iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=259057&apc\\_state=henfrc259119](http://www.iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=259057&apc_state=henfrc259119)

<sup>11</sup> Lawlessness Grows in Kyrgyzstan as Presidential Election Looms, EURASIA INSIGHT, June 2005, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav061305.shtml>

an interim government, demonstrated that the population of Kyrgyzstan had been taken hostage in the feud between the Southern and Northern clans, as well as influential business elites, over power. The interim government also proved to be too weak to maintain stability within the country. Volatile South Kyrgyzstan plunged into interethnic clashes between Uzbeks and Kyrgyzs, which resulted in 2,000 deaths and hundreds of thousands of refugees.<sup>12</sup>

In October 2007, President Kurbanbek Bakiev founded Ak-Zhol (White Path) political party to gain control over the Jogorku Kenesh, Kyrgyz parliament. In the December 2007 Parliamentary elections, the party won 71 out of 90 seats and become one of the three major parties in the parliament in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>13</sup>

Kyrgyzstan, with Roza Otunbayeva as head of the interim government, was politically unstable and economically and strategically dependent on its neighbors Russia, China and Central Asian countries. The strife of the Kyrgyz people to build democracy was rendered futile by the divisiveness of Kyrgyz society, corruption and the inability of Bakiev's apparatus to stabilize the situation in the torn and devastated country, which used to be called "isle of democracy in Central Asia."

The "victory" of the opposition in the 2010 Revolution does not mean the overall improvement of the human rights situation in the country. On the contrary, the country was devastated by the two consecutive revolutions, and has experienced the suppression of human rights activists like Azimjan Askarov, head of the Vozdukh human rights

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<sup>12</sup> На юге Кыргызстана начались столкновения между киргизами и узбеками: есть жертвы (Clashes Between Kyrgyzs and Uzbeks broke out in the South of Kyrgyzstan. There are victims.), Korrespondent.net, May 2010 <http://korrespondent.net/world/1077740>

<sup>13</sup> Как Президент создал Карманный Парламент-2007 (How President Has Created a Pocket Parliament), Kyrgyz News, December 2007, <http://www.kyrgyznews.com/news.php?readmore=3002>

organization, which attempted to cast light on the April 2010 events.<sup>14</sup>

In April 2010, representatives of the National Opposition Movement of Kyrgyzstan reported the beating and kidnapping of leaders of the movement, Kubanychbek Kadyrov and Bektur Asanov. Around a hundred unknown persons broke into the house of one of the members of the National Opposition Movement in Osh, where opposition members were holding a meeting. The attackers beat up everyone in the house and drove a few of the participants in unknown directions. According to one of the members of the opposition movement, Adil Turdukulov believed that the purpose of the attack was to prevent the opposition from organizing an upcoming opposition “kurultay” (congress) scheduled for April 11, 2015.<sup>15</sup>

The 2010 Revolution and subsequent persecution of relatives and associates of ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiev are clear attributes of the feud between political and economic elites in Kyrgyzstan. It should be noted that the newly elected president Almazbek Atambayev, the former Prime Minister during the interim government, played a leading role in the witch hunt targeting the ousted president and his associates.

Having consolidated power in the country, the interim government launched a full-fledged witch hunt targeting former associates of ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiev and members of his family. In May 2010, the Interim Government put close relatives and associates of ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiev on a wanted list, which included Zhanybek Bakiev, a brother of Kurmanbek Bakiev, and the former Chairman of

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<sup>14</sup> Проверка потенциальных кандидатов в президенты КР на преданность обществу и демократическим ценностям (verification of the presidential candidates for loyalty to the society and democratic principles in Kyrgyzstan) Human Rights in Kyrgyzstan, May 2011 <http://prava.kloop.kg/>

<sup>15</sup> Киргизская оппозиция заявила об избииении своих лидеров (Kyrgyz Opposition Told about Beating of Its Leaders), Lenta.ru, April 2015, New lenta.ru/news/2015/04/10/abduction/

the State Guard Service, Maksim Bakiev, the son of Kurmanbek Bakiev and the former head of the Central Agency for Development, Akmatbek Bakiev, a brother of K. Bakiev, Kanybek Bakiev, a brother of K. Bakiev, Daniyar Usenov, the former Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan, Saparbek Balkybekov, the former Minister of Energy, and others and promised bounty in the amount from 20,000 up to 100,000 U.S. dollars to anyone who would provide information on their whereabouts.

In June 2010, Maksim Bakiev arrived in Great Britain where he was detained by British authorities pursuant to an international arrest warrant. Subsequently, Maksim Bakiev requested asylum in Great Britain.<sup>16</sup>

In July 2010, authorities detained Akmatbek Bakiev, a brother of ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiev, who was subsequently sentenced to seven years of imprisonment in a high-security penal colony.<sup>17</sup> In September 2011, Kyrgyz authorities detained twelve-year-old Nursultan Bakiev and Asylbek Bakiev, the nephews of Kurmanbek Bakiev, at the Kyrgyzstan-Kazakhstan border.<sup>18</sup>

In January 2011, Saparbek Balkibaev was detained in Dublin, Ireland, pursuant to an international arrest warrant but Irish authorities refused to extradite Saparbek Bakibekov to Kyrgyzstan. According to 24 Information Agency in Kyrgyzstan, Saparbek Bakibaev was granted asylum in Ireland.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Максим Бакиев арестован в Великобритании - что дальше? (Maksim Bakiev arrested in Great Britain. What is next?), BBC, June 2010, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/international/2010/06/100617\\_bakiev\\_jr\\_detained.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/international/2010/06/100617_bakiev_jr_detained.shtml)

<sup>17</sup> Брат экс-президента Киргизии Бакиева осужден на 7 лет колонии за организацию массовых беспорядков (Borther of ex-president of Kyrgyzstan sentenced to seven years in high security penal colony for organization of mass riots), Gazeta, August 2011, [http://www.gazeta.ru/news/lastnews/2011/08/06/n\\_1955309.shtml](http://www.gazeta.ru/news/lastnews/2011/08/06/n_1955309.shtml)

<sup>18</sup> Киргизские спецслужбы задержали двух племянников Бакиева, направлявшихся в Казахстан (Kyrgyz special survice detained two nephews of Bakiev heading to Kazakhstan), Gazeta, September 2011, [http://www.gazeta.ru/news/lenta/2011/09/05/n\\_1995245.shtml](http://www.gazeta.ru/news/lenta/2011/09/05/n_1995245.shtml)

<sup>19</sup> Ирландия отказалась выдавать киргизского экс-министра (Ireland refused to extradite Former Minister of Kyrgyzstan), Lenta.ru, February 2011, <http://lenta.ru/news/2011/02/09/refuse/>

The Prosecutor General's Office is seeking extradition of ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiev, his relatives and associates but none of the states (Belarus, Latvia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Great Britain) agreed to extradition, fearing that they would be subjected to political persecution if returned to Kyrgyzstan.<sup>20</sup>

Incumbent President Atambaev blames the Bakievs and their supporters for every problem in Kazakhstan and continues to demand extradition of the former president Kurmanbek Bakiev and his family. In March 2013, he commented

“We will try to bring the Bakievs back to Kyrgyzstan. Sooner or later, these people will get what they deserve because there is a God and there are people. I believe that we will manage to bring them back to the country and place them on trial.”<sup>21</sup>

On May 31, 2013, President Atambaev announced a state of emergency for the Jety-Oguz District in Northern Kyrgyzstan after three thousand protesters clashed with police.<sup>22</sup> Commenting on the events, Almazbek Atambaev again indirectly accused Bakiev and his supporters of attempting to destabilize the situation in Kyrgyzstan:

“I cannot disregard the events, which took place in Jety-Oguz and Jalal-Abad, especially when in Jalal-Abad the only road that connects the north and the south of the country was blocked. It makes us think. We can see that there are certain forces that want to push us towards a tragedy. Yet again, those, who gave orders to

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<sup>20</sup> Белоруссия отказалась выдавать Киргизии экс-президента Бакиева, его обвиняют в гибели людей (Belarus refused to extradite former President of Kyrgyzstan held responsible for death of people to Kyrgyzstan), Gazeta, October 2011, [http://www.gazeta.ru/news/lenta/2011/10/17/n\\_2056298.shtml](http://www.gazeta.ru/news/lenta/2011/10/17/n_2056298.shtml)

<sup>21</sup> В Киргизии не осталось проблем кроме Бакиева? (There are no other problems in Kyrgyzstan but Bakiev), Inosmi, March 2013, <http://inosmi.ru/sngbaltia/20130313/206928109.html>

<sup>22</sup> Dozens Hurt, Emergency Declared As Kyrgyz Protesters, Police Clash, Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, May 2013, <http://www.rferl.org/content/kyrgyzstan-gold-mine-violence-kumtor/25002830.html>

shoot in April 2010, rejoice.”<sup>23</sup>

On April 10, 2014, in Bishkek, police detained dozens of participants in an opposition rally. According to police data, there were more than one hundred and fifty participants detained. However, Azimbek Beknazarov, an opposition politician, claims that police detained around five hundred people. The opposition rallies took place in several other cities of Kyrgyzstan. The participants demanded reduction of presidential powers, review of the agreement on Kyrgyzstan joining a Russian-sponsored Customs Union, and the release of a former speaker of parliament.<sup>24</sup>

On May 20, 2014, police detained six activists, including Burul Makenbayeva, leader of the Psychological Health and Society non-governmental association, Evgeniya Krapivina, an attorney for the Voice of Freedom Fund, and her assistant Olesya Kim during a protest against Kyrgyzstan joining the Customs Union. According to activists, the police officers did not provide any reasons for the arrests.<sup>25</sup>

On June 9, 2014, in Bishkek, using physical force, police detained protestors, who gathered in front of the White House to express their discontent with government policies.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to this, the Kyrgyz government up to this day uses a legal system to

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<sup>23</sup> Атамбаев посоветовал беглому Бакиеву молчать (Atambaev recommended ousted Bakiev to keep his mouth shut), Vecherniy Bishkek, June 2012,

[http://www.vb.kg/doc/231803\\_atambaev\\_posovetoval\\_beglomy\\_bakiev\\_molchat.html](http://www.vb.kg/doc/231803_atambaev_posovetoval_beglomy_bakiev_molchat.html)

<sup>24</sup> Десятки сторонников оппозиции задержаны в Бишкеке (Dozens of opposition supporters detained in Bishkek), Radio Freedom, April 2014, <http://rus.azattyq.org/content/news/25328245.html>

<sup>25</sup> Кыргызстан возвращается в «старые добрые времена» (I Kyrgyzstan going back to “old times?”), Voice of Freedom in Central Asia, May 2014, <http://vof.kg/?p=14550>

<sup>26</sup> В Бишкеке задержаны участники митинга против отключения газа на юге Киргизии (In Bishkek, participants in the protest against gas outages in South Kyrgyzstan detained), News Asia, June 2014, <http://www.news-asia.ru/view/6641>

keep tight control on its population. This system of official compulsory registration of residents coercively attaches Kyrgyz citizens to one municipality in Kyrgyzstan or excludes them from all of them. The residency permit is commonly referred to by its Soviet-era name of *propiska*. Its existence provides justification for a range of abuses of citizens of Kyrgyzstan and constitutes a haphazard, bureaucratic, potentially discriminatory registration system. Because of the historical and cultural circumstances of minorities in Kyrgyzstan, officials can and often do use residency permits as a tool of deliberate discrimination or harassment against them.

The Kyrgyz government also persecutes individuals who express their disagreement with the situation in the country. Thus, in November 2015, Mavlyan Askarbekov, a popular social activist and politician in Kyrgyzstan, was interrogated at the Prosecutor's Office because of his Facebook post that criticized the authorities and blamed them with the connection of the prison breakout of October 11, 2015, that had been committed by nine dangerous criminals. According to Askarbekov, he merely expressed his opinion on a social media site, saying that the breakout was organized by the authorities to draw the people's attention away from the post-election process and the overall bad economic and political situation in the country. Mavlyan Askarbekov believes the interrogation was an attempt to put pressure on his opposition political movement "Zhany Muun," but he pointed out that he could not help expressing his position.<sup>27</sup> So, an almost innocent criticism of the authorities led to the interrogation at the Prosecutor's Office. In fact, this example illustrates the extent to which the Kyrgyz government shuns the voices of the opposition.

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<sup>27</sup> Ставил «Лайк» - иди в тюрьму. (Clicked "Like" – go to prison). "Nastoyashee Vremya" news agency. November 13, 2015. [http://www.currenttime.tv/info/about\\_us/4132.html](http://www.currenttime.tv/info/about_us/4132.html)

Overall, the revolutions in Kyrgyzstan have brought nothing but the shuffling of power between political elites and powerful clans in Kyrgyzstan, and unprecedented increase in Kyrgyz nationalism.

In the aftermath of the 2010 Revolution, Almazbek Atambayev, former chairman and cofounder of the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan, won the October 2011 Presidential Elections, the first peaceful succession of power since the 2005 Revolution, and assumed the presidency on December 1, 2011.<sup>28</sup>

Supporters of the presidential candidates from South Kyrgyzstan, Kamchybek Tashiev, a leader of the Ata Zhurt Party, and Adakhan Madumarov, a leader of the Butun Kyrgyzstan Party, accused President Atambayev, who was serving as Prime Minister during the interim government, of abusing administrative resources and widespread violations of the voting process to highjack the presidential elections.<sup>29</sup> Corien Jonker, Head of the Election Observation Mission of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), criticized the October presidential elections for lack of integrity of voting, counting and tabulation and for the lack of transparency.<sup>30</sup>

On October 15, 2017, Almazbek Atambayev's henchman, former prime minister Sooronbay Jeyenbekov, won the presidential elections by securing 55 percent of the vote. Although the elections seemed to be the first truly democratic elections in the region,

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<sup>28</sup> Киргизия выбрала нового президента. Оппозиция не согласна (Kyrgyzstan elected new president. Opposition disagrees), Forbes, October 2011, <http://www.forbes.ru/sobytiya-column/vlast/75849-kirgiziya-vybrala-novogo-prezidenta-oppozitsiya-rezultaty-vyborov-ne-pri>

<sup>29</sup> Атамбаев набрал на выборах в Киргизии больше 63% голосов, в США требуют изучить все нарушения (Atambayev gained more than 63 per cent of votes in elections in Kyrgyzstan. The United States demand to study all violations), NEWS.ru, November 2011, <http://www.newsru.com/world/01nov2011/kirgiz.html>

<sup>30</sup> Kyrgyzstan's presidential election was peaceful, but shortcomings underscore need to improve integrity of process, OSCE, October 2011, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/84571>

with Jeyenbekov's closest rival Omurbek Babanov receiving 34 percent of the vote, in reality, elements of political struggle typical of authoritarian regimes were revealed. Babanov complained that a media campaign emphasizing his half-Turkish origin and the origin of his Kazakh wife was launched against him in order to diminish his chances to win. Also, some of his close supporters were arrested during the presidential campaign for plotting an overflow of the state. After the elections, Babanov stated that he was afraid of being arrested on trumped-up charges.<sup>31</sup> Another presidential candidate and the leader of the Ata-Meken opposition party Omurbek Tekebaev was imprisoned before the vote under corruption charges.

In reality, the outgoing president Almazbek Atambayev had no inclination to lose his power, and he put Sooronbay Jeyenbekov, his seemingly puppet, to rule the country. In order to protect his protégé, Atambayev and his cohort used all means to destroy any political competitor or opponent. However, Sooronbay Jeyenbekov turned against his boss.

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<sup>31</sup> Kyrgyzstan Holds an Election that was not a Foregone Conclusion. The Economist. October 21, 2017. <https://www.economist.com/news/asia/21730385-nor-was-it-triumph-democracy-kyrgyzstan-holds-election-was-not-foregone-conclusion>



Supporters of the former Kyrgyzstan president Almazbek Atambayev clash with special forces outside his home. Photograph: Vyacheslav Oseledko/AFP/Getty. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/08/kyrgyzstan-ex-president-almazbek-atambayev>

On August 8, 2019 police in Kyrgyzstan have detained the former president Almazbek Atambayev after an outbreak of violence during a botched raid on his compound left a police officer dead and nearly 80 people injured. The violence has raised the threat of fresh turmoil in the former Soviet country.<sup>32</sup> The arrest of Atambayev illustrates the power struggle in Kyrgyzstan, where every president does everything in his power to get a stronger grip over the country.

In April 2018, the Freedom House Organization issued the 2017 Nations in Transit Report, where they called Kyrgyzstan a country with a “consolidated authoritarian regime.” The authors noted imprisonment and persecution of the president’s

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<sup>32</sup> Kyrgyzstan's former president detained after violent clashes. The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/08/kyrgyzstan-ex-president-almazbek-atambayev>

political opponents before the elections and fining of the mass media outlets criticizing the president as factors contributing to the democracy deterioration in the country.<sup>33</sup>

Individuals who dare to criticize the government experience harassment, torment and persecution in the country.<sup>34</sup> In fact, Kyrgyzstan political system stays authoritarian under every president ruling the country.

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<sup>33</sup> Freedom House: Показатели демократии в Кыргызстане ухудшились (Freedom House: Democracy Indices in Kyrgyzstan Declined). April 12, 2018. 24kg.com News Agency.

[https://24.kg/obschestvo/81287\\_Freedom\\_House\\_pokazateli\\_demokratii\\_vkyrgyzstane\\_uhudshilis/](https://24.kg/obschestvo/81287_Freedom_House_pokazateli_demokratii_vkyrgyzstane_uhudshilis/)

<sup>34</sup> Kyrgyzstan: Lawsuits, attacks and harassment used against journalists, activists and human rights defenders. International Partnership for Human Rights, June 23, 2019.

<https://www.iphronline.org/kyrgyzstan-civicus-april-june-2019.html>