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Country of origin research and information

CORI Country Report Southern Kyrgyzstan, December 2010

Commissioned by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,

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Preface

Country of Origin Information (COI) is required within Refugee Status Determination (RSD) to provide objective evidence on conditions in refugee producing countries to support decision making. Quality information about human rights, legal provisions, politics, culture, society, religion and healthcare in countries of origin is essential in establishing whether or not a person's fear of persecution is well founded.

CORI Country Reports are designed to aid decision making within RSD. They are not intended to be general reports on human rights conditions. They serve a specific purpose, collating legally relevant information on conditions in countries of origin, pertinent to the assessment of claims for asylum. Categories of COI included within this report are based on the most common issues arising from asylum applications made by nationals from Kyrgyzstan. This report covers events up to 20 December 2010.

COI is a specific discipline distinct from academic, journalistic or policy writing, with its own conventions and protocols of professional standards as outlined in international guidance such as The Common EU Guidelines on Processing Country of Origin Information, 2008 and UNHCR, Country of Origin Information: Towards Enhanced International Cooperation, 2004.

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CORI is an independent centre providing specialist research resources to support Refugee Status Determination.

CORI works internationally with all parties to RSD, including governments, legal representatives and NGOs, producing commissioned research reports and providing knowledge management services. CORI works to improve standards of COI production through capacity building and training.

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A. Background and Recent Developments

1. Political Actors and System in Kyrgyzstan

According to the *US Department of State (USDOS)* 2009 country report published in March 2010,

“The Kyrgyz Republic's 2007 constitution defines the country as a sovereign, unitary, democratic state based on the rule of law. The country, with a population of approximately 5.4 million, has an elected president, an appointed prime minister and cabinet, and an elected Supreme Council (parliament).”¹

The *Inter Parliamentary Union* reports that Kyrgyzstan's parliament, the Jogorku Kenesh (Supreme Council), is unicameral with 120 directly elected representatives.²

The *USDOS* noted with regard to the July 2009 presidential election in which President Bakiev was re-elected,

“According to independent election observers, the July 23 presidential election failed to meet many of the country's international commitments and was marred by significant obstacles for opposition parties, intimidation, voting irregularities, and the use of government resources to benefit specific political interests. Three parties are represented in parliament, with the pro-presidential Ak Jol party holding 71 of 90 seats. Civilian authorities generally maintained effective control over the security forces, although there were isolated cases of serious human rights abuses.”³

In *Freedom House's* January 2010 report on Kyrgyzstan, the organisation states that the country's democratic standards have weakened,

“Kyrgyzstan's political rights rating declined from 5 to 6, its civil liberties rating from 4 to 5, and its status from Partly Free to Not Free due to a flawed presidential election, the concentration of power in the executive branch, and new legal restrictions on freedom of religion.”⁴

The *International Crisis Group* reports in April 2010 on the impact of the overthrow of President Bakiev and the challenges facing the interim Kyrgyz government,

“A swift, violent rebellion swept into the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek in early April 2010, sparked by anger at painful utility price increases and the corruption that was the de-fining characteristic of President Kurmanbek Bakiyev's rule. In less than two days the president had fled. Some 85 people were killed and the centre of the capital was looted. The thirteen-member provisional government now faces a daunting series of challenges. Bakiyev leaves behind a bankrupt state hollowed out by corruption and crime. Economic failure and collapsing infrastructure have generated deep public resentment.

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The speed with which the Bakiyev administration collapsed is a salutary reminder of the risks of overemphasising Western security concerns in framing policy towards the region. So far the provisional government's performance has not been promising. Its members have largely failed to present themselves as a cohesive or coherent administration, or to be

¹ USDOS, 2009 Human Rights Report: Kyrgyzstan, 11 March 2010, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/sca/136089.htm>, accessed 10 October 2010

² The Inter-Parliamentary Union, Kyrgyzstan; Jogorku Kenesh (Supreme Council), Latest elections, http://www.ipu.org/parline/reports/2174_E.htm, accessed 15 December 2010

³ USDOS, 2009 Human Rights Report: Kyrgyzstan, 11 March 2010, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/sca/136089.htm>, accessed 10 October 2010

⁴ Freedom House, Freedom in the World - Kyrgyzstan (2010), 12 January 2010, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2010&country=7856>, accessed 12 November 2010

transparent about their activities at a time of great anxiety and uncertainty. They have displayed a lack of common ideology or strategy, and show signs of internal discord.”⁵

A *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* article published in April 2010 notes the challenges faced by the Kyrgyz provisional government following the overthrow of President Bakiev “and his internationally brokered departure late on April 15,”⁶

“The next six months will be a decisive period for Kyrgyzstan. That’s the amount of time the country’s provisional government -- which took power last week after President Kurmanbek Bakiev initially fled the capital following violent protests opposing his rule -- has allotted itself to write a new constitution, create an electoral code, and hold elections for a new parliament.

Amid the general euphoria at the downfall of Bakiev and his internationally brokered departure late on April 15, one pressing question hangs in the air: Is the interim government now running the country -- composed of 14 former opposition figures from a variety of different political parties -- sufficiently durable and capable of governing Kyrgyzstan over the next half year?

While few people are dismayed to see Bakiev gone, the way in which he was removed from office was hardly ideal. “The greatest threat [to stability in Kyrgyzstan] is how the government came to power and where they get their legitimacy from,” says Donna Stewart of the USAID-funded PACT, which works to strengthen civil society and democracy in Kyrgyzstan.

To be sure, the Bakiev regime had stifled many forms of democratic dissent and a violent ouster might have been the only way to force him out of office. But that only emphasizes the vast structural weaknesses of Kyrgyz political culture, which -- ironically, given the country’s never-ending political turmoil -- lacks genuine politics.

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The members of the provisional government now running the country were appointed last month to a National Executive which was able to quickly take the reins once Bakiev was deposed. They have announced plans to write a new constitution that will establish a parliamentary system with a weakened executive branch, effectively transforming the president into a ceremonial position. This, they hope, will help the country avoid the problems that it faced under its last two leaders.

Kyrgyzstan’s political culture is personality-dominated, and whatever conflicts the country faces over the next six months will likely originate over differences among the various leaders vying for power in the provisional government. The only thing uniting these 14 leaders is that, at some point in their political careers, they all became opponents of Bakiev. And there is no telling what sort of divisions and problems will arise among them now.”⁷

The *BBC* report that after Bakiev was ousted, Roza Otunbaeva was chosen as “leader of an opposition-dominated interim government” and later formally sworn in as care-taker President.⁸

A *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* article published in June 2010 notes the difficulties the Kyrgyz government has experienced in controlling areas of the country with deep ethnic divisions,

⁵ International Crisis Group, *Kyrgyzstan - A Hollow Regime Collapses*, 27 April 2010, http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/files/asia/central-asia/kyrgyzstan/193_the_pogroms_in_kyrgyzstan.ashx, accessed 18 November 2010

⁶ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *Will Too Many Cooks Spoil the Kyrgyz Soup*, 16 April 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Will_Too_Many_Cooks_Spoil_the_Kyrgyz_Soup/2015669.html, accessed 12 November 2010

⁷ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *Will Too Many Cooks Spoil the Kyrgyz Soup*, 16 April 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Will_Too_Many_Cooks_Spoil_the_Kyrgyz_Soup/2015669.html, accessed 12 November 2010

⁸ BBC, *Kyrgyzstan Country Profile*, 1 December 2010, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/country_profiles/1296485.stm#leaders, accessed 10 December 2010

“The interim government, headed by Roza Otunbaeva in the aftermath of the protests in April that forced the President Kurmanbek Bakiev out of power, gave hope to millions of people -- including both Uzbeks and Kyrgyz -- that a more democratic and worthy future would ensue after years of misery and ineffective public policies.

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The sequence of events in Kyrgyzstan -- the Kyrgyz-Uzbek conflicts in 1990, the "Tulip Revolution" in 2005, the protests in 2010, and the ongoing clashes -- all demonstrate the instability and fragility of this authoritarian country.

Indeed, it is the authoritarian nature of the regimes and politics in Kyrgyzstan -- characterized by corruption, nepotism, and failed domestic and foreign policies -- that has deprived the people of the possibilities of economic development and social stability. And now it has brought the very viability of the Kyrgyz state into question”⁹

In June 2010 Kyrgyzstan held a referendum on the adoption of a new constitution; according to Reuters on 27 June the results supported the creation of a new constitution,

“Under the new charter, Otunbayeva -- the first woman to lead a Central Asian state -- will be acting president until the end of 2011. Parliamentary elections will be held every five years and the president limited to a single six-year term.

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The referendum asked voters to support changes to the constitution that will devolve power from the president to a prime minister, paving the way for parliamentary elections in October and diplomatic recognition for the interim government.”¹⁰

A July 2010 report by *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* notes the results of the June referendum on a new constitution for Kyrgyzstan,

“Kyrgyzstan's new constitution has come into force after election authorities released the final results of a referendum on the charter last week, clearing the way for the inauguration of an interim president.

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Election commission head Akylbek Sariev has said the release of the final tally paves the way for interim leader Roza Otunbaeva to be sworn in as president on July 3.

"Roza Otunbaeva is to be registered as president of the Kyrgyz Republic and receive the presidential identification, the [presidential] badge, and the state flag of the president of the Kyrgyz Republic," Sariev said. The new constitution was proposed by Kyrgyzstan's interim leaders who came into power after President Kurmanbek Bakiev was ousted following mass street protests in April.”¹¹

The *World Bank* notes in a September 2010 briefing that the June 2010 referendum institutes a new constitution in Kyrgyzstan,

“On June 27, 2010, the national referendum approved a new constitution which establishes a new form of government -- a parliamentary republic.

⁹ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *Breaking Kyrgyzstan's Cycle Of Violence*, 17 June 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Commentary_Breaking_Kyrgyzstan_Cycle_Of_Violence/2074823.html, accessed 2 November 2010

¹⁰ Reuters, *after bloodshed, Kyrgyzstan backs new constitution*, 27 June 2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE65P3AE20100627>, accessed 10 December 2010

¹¹ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *New Kyrgyz Constitution Comes Into Force*, 2 July 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/New_Kyrgyz_Constitution_Comes_Into_Force/2089097.html, accessed 2 November 2010

The referendum also approved the interim presidency of Ms. Roza Otunbayeva, who will remain in office for a transitional period, until the end of 2011. The current Government reports to the President."¹²

A *EurasiaNet* article published in September 2010 comments on the concerns of ethnic Uzbek politicians regarding the upcoming October parliamentary elections,

"Some Uzbek politicians see the elections as an opportunity to try to enhance minority rights. But the majority of Uzbeks, mindful of the harm that their community suffered during the June violence in southern Kyrgyzstan, appears hesitant to get involved in the political process.

The experience of the past four months has left many Uzbeks profoundly skeptical about their ability to produce change via the ballot box, Uzbek community observers say. "After the violent events, Uzbeks are afraid to come out to the streets," said an Osh-based human rights activist who spoke on condition of anonymity. "Many Uzbeks were jailed, others are continuously harassed. How can they vote under such circumstances ? "

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Some Uzbeks believe participation in politics stands a better chance of aggravating what they say is the existing atmosphere of discrimination, rather than easing it. "We should leave politics to the Kyrgyz; it's their business. This will be a safe choice for us," said Husanbay, an Osh carpenter who asked his last name not be printed.

Overall, 29 political parties are vying for the 120 parliamentary seats. Given the provisional leadership's intention to re-fashion Kyrgyzstan as a parliamentary republic, the composition of the new legislature could have a profound impact on the country's democratization process.

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Not all Uzbeks are staying away from politics. Two prominent Uzbek political leaders -- Anvar Artykov and Murat Juraev, representing the Ar-Namys and Ak-Shumkar parties, respectively -- hope to gain seats in parliament. Meanwhile, other Uzbek public figures have campaigned with Kyrgyz politicians during appearances in Uzbek neighborhoods.

A few Uzbeks also say there are practical benefits to joining political parties. For example, an instructor at an Osh university who recently joined the Ata-Meken Party, contended that party membership can offer protection from police harassment. The police are almost uniformly ethnic Kyrgyz."¹³

A report by *Reuters* published in October 2010 notes the expectation that the parliamentary elections might help stabilize Kyrgyzstan's political system,

"Unique among elections in ex-Soviet Central Asia, dominated by presidential strongmen, voters pinned hopes on parties jostling for enough parliamentary seats to pick a prime minister who will try to bridge political and ethnic rifts.

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Otunbayeva came to power after a popular revolt in April toppled President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, a former opposition leader who had taken over after his predecessor was chased from office by street protesters in 2005.

After nearly two decades of failed authoritarian rule, interim leaders want to empower a prime minister to restore stability in the former Soviet republic, where clashes between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks killed more than 400 people in June.

¹² World Bank, Country Brief 2010, September 2010, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/ECAEXT/KYRGYZEXTN/0,,contentMDK:20629311~menuPK:305768~pagePK:141137~piPK:141127~theSitePK:305761,00.html>, accessed 18 November 2010

¹³ EurasiaNet, Kyrgyzstan's Uzbeks Sitting Out Parliamentary Campaign, 27 September 2010, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/62023>, accessed 2 November 2010

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To guard against fraud, voters' thumbs were stamped with indelible ink, a safeguard against multiple voting.

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) stationed 40 long-term observers around the country and a further 200 short-term observers arrived for the vote, part of a total contingent of some 800 observers.

There were some isolated reports of attempted vote-rigging. Presidential chief-of-staff Emilbek Kaptagayev said two election officials in the southern region of Jalalabad had been charged with issuing extra ballot papers.”¹⁴

The *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* report that half of eligible voters cast votes and that according to the parliamentary election results “only 35 percent of the Kyrgyz electorate will be represented in the new Jogorku Kenesh.”¹⁵ The *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* reports the election results as follows;

Party	Percentage Won	Votes Cast	Parliament Seats
Ata Jurt	8.47	257,100	28
SDPK	7.83	236,634	26
Ar-Namys	7.57	226,916	25
Respublica	6.93	210,594	23
Ata Meken	5.49	166,714	18 ¹⁶

The *Jamestown Foundation* reports in an October 2010 article following the Kyrgyz elections that the ballot was widely seen as a success overall,

“The parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan on October 10 were the most free and fair in Central Asia’s post-Soviet history.

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Ironically, partly because of the liberal political environment in Kyrgyzstan, mostly opposition parties, not those representing the ruling government, won the elections. Among them were Ata-Jurt, Ar-Namys and the Respublika party. Two parties responsible for instigating the regime change on April 7 – Ata-Meken and the Social-Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (SDPK) – may form a parliamentary minority.

Overall, the five political parties that were able to overcome the 5 percent threshold earned the following support: Ata-Jurt (8.8 percent), SDPK (8.04 percent), Ar-Namys (7.74 percent), Respublika (7.24 percent), and Ata-Meken (5.6 percent) (www.ca-news, October 11).

In line with the electoral code requirements, ethnic minorities, including Uzbek leaders, occupy strong positions in the parties’ lists. Furthermore, roughly one-third of the parliament will be composed of female Members of Parliament (MP’s).

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However, Kyrgyzstan is still a long way from real political competition. The pre-electoral campaigning was mostly based on promoting political leaders rather than political ideas.

¹⁴ Reuters, Landmark Kyrgyz election passes without violence, 10 October 2010, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKTRE69814E20101010>, accessed 12 November 2010

¹⁵ Carnegie endowment for International Peace, New Kyrgyz Parliament represents fraction of electorate, undated, <http://kyrgyzstan.carnegieendowment.org/2010/11/new-kyrgyz-parliament-represents-fraction-of-the-electorate/>, accessed 10 December 2010

¹⁶ Carnegie endowment for International Peace, New Kyrgyz Parliament represents fraction of electorate, undated, <http://kyrgyzstan.carnegieendowment.org/2010/11/new-kyrgyz-parliament-represents-fraction-of-the-electorate/>, accessed 10 December 2010

Although political leaders participated in public debates, there were only a few analytical discussions that compared competing parties' political programs.

Furthermore, two of the five parties – Ata-Jurt and Respublika – were formed in the past few months, but managed to earn support partly thanks to intense political campaigning. In the case of the Ata-Jurt party, ethno-nationalist politics helped to gain majority support from ethnic Kyrgyz living in southern Kyrgyzstan. The party also advocated the return of the ousted President, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, as most of its members worked closely with the former leader. In the case of Respublika, Jamestown sources suggested that the party spent roughly \$15 million on its political campaign, three times more than most other political parties.”¹⁷

Reuters reports in October 2010 that following the parliamentary election an opposition party claimed voting irregularities had occurred,

“A Kyrgyzstan opposition party rallied in Bishkek on Tuesday, accusing authorities of cheating it of seats in parliamentary elections and warning of possible upheavals in the former Soviet Central Asia state.

The protest by some 2,500 supporters of the Butun Kyrgyzstan party underscored volatility in the impoverished nation after the violent overthrow of its president in April and the worst ethnic violence in its modern history in which 400 people were killed in June.

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Only five of 29 parties won seats in parliament in the Oct. 10 poll, a crucial step in creating the first parliamentary democracy in authoritarian Central Asia. Over 60 percent of voters cast ballots for parties that failed to cross the five percent threshold qualifying them to enter parliament.

Butun Kyrgyzstan, which came sixth in the election, rallied in the centre of the capital Bishkek, calling on authorities "to take a just decision".

"We have been cheated by the authorities, but we will hold our actions within the framework of the law," Marat Kayipov, a Butun Kyrgyzstan leader, said through a loudspeaker from the back of a truck parked in a central square.

"But if there is an unjust decision, we will change the authorities. We will give them one more day."

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Kyrgyzstan's central election commission, which has yet to announce final official results, called last week for verification of protocols from many polling stations after Butun Kyrgyzstan said it had been robbed of seats in the legislature.”¹⁸

The *OSCE* notes with regard to the conduct of the parliamentary elections in October 2010 that the ballot was largely fair and transparent, though further improvements to the electoral process in Kyrgyzstan are required,

“The 10 October parliamentary elections were conducted in a peaceful manner. The authorities displayed the political will to bring the Kyrgyz Republic closer to holding democratic elections in line with OSCE commitments. Political pluralism, a vibrant campaign and confidence in the Central Commission for Elections and Referenda (CEC) characterized these elections. Fundamental freedoms, including the freedoms of expression, assembly and association, were generally respected. Overall, these elections constituted a further consolidation of the democratic process. Nevertheless, there is an urgent need for profound electoral legal reform.

¹⁷ The Jamestown Foundation, Landmark Elections in Kyrgyzstan Produce Surprising Results, 14 October 2010, [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=37032&cHash=234e9c18d4](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=37032&cHash=234e9c18d4), accessed 18 November 2010

¹⁸ Reuters, Kyrgyz vote losers threaten authorities with chaos, 19 October 2010, <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/LDE691D6.htm>, accessed 12 November 2010

The inclusive registration process resulted in a pluralistic field of political parties which provided voters with a genuine choice. The campaign was highly competitive and took place in a peaceful atmosphere throughout the country despite underlying tensions following the tragic events in June. Political parties were able to campaign freely, with no major impediments or incidents. However, there were a few observed incidents of coercion of students and government employees to attend rallies and some local administrations were biased towards certain parties.”¹⁹

The *BBC* report that,

“In November 2010, the first parliamentary elections under the new constitution produced a three-party coalition led by Ms Otunbayeva's Social Democratic Party. The largest party in parliament, the nationalist Ata Zhurt, went into opposition.”²⁰

The *Inter-Parliamentary Union* report that,

“On 10 November, the newly elected Supreme Council held its first session.

The following day, Transitional President Otunbayeva tasked the Social Democrats with forming a coalition government. On 29 November, the Social Democratic Party (26 seats), Ata-Meken (18 seats) and Respublika (23 seats) announced that they would try to form a coalition. However, they were reportedly divided over the candidacy for the speakership. On 2 December, their sole candidate - Ata-Meken party leader Omurbek Tekebaev - failed to win election as Speaker with 58 votes for, 59 votes against. On 7 December, Transitional President Otunbayeva invited Respublika party leader Omurbek Babanov to form a government.”²¹

A *USAID* gender assessment document covering the Central Asian republics, published in March 2010, notes that steps have been taken to implement gender equality, though these measures are not always enforced adequately,

“The principle of equal rights is specified in the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic as the equal rights of men and women to participate in the elections and referendums; to obtain, to change and to keep citizenship; to receive education, medical aid, pensions and social benefits; to have individual labor; to marry and to bring up children; to have parental leave for baby-care; and to have property. Additionally, they are equal in a number of civic, economic and political rights. In 2007, the Constitution of the KR (article 13, paragraph 4) was amended to guarantee not only equal freedoms and rights, but also the equal opportunities to execute them as well.

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The Election Code was amended in Article 72 Paragraph 3 to direct political parties to nominate no more than 70 percent of the same sex to the list of candidates for election to deputies of the Jigorku Kenesh (Parliament), and that the list should ensure that both sexes are represented in every three positions. Paragraph 5 of the same Article was amended to require that lists cannot be changed after submission to the Central Election Committee (CEC), and in case a candidate leaves his/her place, it is to be occupied by another party member based on the requirements of paragraph 3. As a result of this special measure, the number of women increased from zero representation in the previous parliament to 23 persons (25.6%) today. However, this measure does not apply to the procedures for local keneshes (councils).

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¹⁹OSCE, Kyrgyz Republic - Parliamentary Elections, 11 October 2010, http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2010/10/47026_en.pdf, accessed 12 November 2010

²⁰ BBC, Kyrgyzstan Country Profile, 1 December 2010, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/country_profiles/1296485.stm#leaders, accessed 10 December 2010

²¹ The Inter-Parliamentary Union, Kyrgyzstan; Jogorku Kenesh (Supreme Council), Latest elections, http://www.ipu.org/parline/reports/2174_E.htm, accessed 15 December 2010

Since the administrative reform in 2009, the institutional mechanism responsible for implementation of the gender policy – the National Gender Council lead by the State Secretary – was restructured. As a result of the reforms, the position of a State Secretary was abolished, and the working structure was removed as well. The functions to implement the gender policy (combined with youth, family and childhood issues) were assigned to a newly-created Ministry of Labor, Occupation, and Migration. Nowadays, a leader of the new Ministry has asked for gender experts' support to develop the concept of the structure of the Ministry. But there is no mention of gender policy even in the name of the ministry and the renewed Ministry of Labor, Occupation, and Migration has too many areas of focus. As a result, the prospects for implementation of a gender policy are tenuous."²²

Commenting on the parliamentary system in the country, *Freedom House* further notes in its January 2010 report that corruption is pervasive in the Kyrgyz government,

"Constitutional changes adopted in the hastily organized 2007 referendum expanded the unicameral parliament from 75 to 90 deputies, with party-list voting replacing single-member districts. Both president and parliament serve five-year terms, and the majority party in the parliament nominates the prime minister.

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Corruption is pervasive in Kyrgyz society, and bribes are frequently required to obtain lucrative government positions."²³

A June 2010 article by *Voice of America* notes the impact of narcotics trafficking and the widespread criminality and corruption present in public office,

"If you want to pick a fight in southern Kyrgyzstan, a good place to start is with the criminals. Not the ones in jail, but the criminals hanging out in the bazaar, coffee shop or even the town office.

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The criminals often have legitimate day jobs – they run businesses, fight fires and hold public office. But their real power comes from dirty money, largely earned by trafficking heroin from Afghanistan to Russia.

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Hakan Demirbuken, with the U.N. Office of Drugs and Crime, says Kyrgyzstan is an ideal trafficking hub because of its poorly controlled borders and institutionalized corruption.

"We are talking about the government officials. Possibly the people involved in organizing the law enforcement in the country," Demirbuken says. "Without having some support from the officials, it is impossible to traffic all that amount of heroin from one country to another one."

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Jones says the April overthrow of the Bakiyev government and the ethnic clashes in Osh have created yet another opportunity for the criminal powers to shift.

"They're all very much taking advantage of the continuant instability," says Jones. "And for many of them, it's in their interest to continue that until they gain whatever specific objective they have."

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Jones says that while organized crime will always be violent, the instability in Kyrgyzstan should ease. "It's in their interest to actually have it settle down and have one person that they're regularly paying. You can think of it as the efficiency of corruption," says Jones. Kyrgyzstan's interim government has pledged to reinstate the country's anti- drug agency,

²² USAID, Gender Assessment, USAID/Central Asian Republics, March 2010, pp.27-28, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADS880.pdf, accessed 2 November 2010

²³ Freedom House, Freedom in the World - Kyrgyzstan (2010), 12 January 2010, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2010&country=7856>, accessed 12 November 2010

and Russia is considering setting up a second base in Kyrgyzstan to tackle the narcotics trade.”²⁴

The *Institute for War & Peace Reporting* states in a November 2010 report that anti-corruption efforts in Kyrgyzstan have faltered despite efforts to reduce bribery of officials,

“While everyone agrees that corruption is endemic in Kyrgyzstan and its social and economic effects are corrosive, effective methods of tackling it have yet to be devised. “Bribery has become commonplace in our country and no one is surprised at it,” Abdykerim Ashymov of the Citizens Against Corruption group said. “There are rules for how to go about offering money. State employees take bribes and then do what they’re supposed to do anyway... and members of public don’t go to the police about it.”

The authorities focus on putting tougher anti-corruption legislation in place, although others argue that the police force cannot be trusted to implement it, as its own record is far from clean. Some fear that entrapment techniques targeting allegedly corrupt officials could turn into just another money-making venture.”²⁵

2. External Actors, Including Islamic Extremists and Terrorist Groups

A report by *Central Asia Online* in May 2010 notes that Kyrgyz instability could present opportunities for Islamic militants to strengthen their presence in Kyrgyzstan,

“Post-uprising Kyrgyzstan might become a hotbed for religious extremists, some analysts predict. Kyrgyzstan faces a tough period of containing the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan’s (IMU) and Hizb ut-Tahrir’s ambitions, they said.

“In the upcoming months before the election, religious extremism will gradually intensify. It is still not possible to say with any certainty what this will lead to”, said Kadyr Malikov, director of the Religion, Law and Politics think-tank. Radicals already have made one effort to attain power, he said. After the overthrow of then-President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, they attempted to move their protégés into Kyrgyzstan’s Spiritual Administration for Muslims, he said.

The interim government rejects the interpretation that struggles within the Spiritual Administration might indicate the beginning of religious extremists’ fight for power. Kanybek Osmonaliyev, director of the State Committee on Religious Affairs until his firing on May 14, said, “Muslim Kyrgyz have never been that radical”.

“Our sources tell us that in Shaartuz and Pyandzh, extremists came down from the more mountainous regions in April and tried to rally people to go to Kyrgyzstan’s border”, a representative of the Tajik Committee for National Security said. “But they aren’t as numerous as many people imagine”.

The Uzbek National Security Council has information about “certain (insurgent) movements within the Fergana Valley from Uzbekistan”, an anonymous representative of that council said. “Given the worsening situation in Kyrgyzstan, the Islamists are likely to try to break into Kyrgyzstan’s territory, where there is less control”. He emphasised that he was referring to the IMU and Hizb ut-Tahrir.

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²⁴ VOA, Kyrgyzstan Unrest Reveals Influence of Drug Money, Organized Crime, 29 June 2010, <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/asia/Kyrgyz-Unrest-Highlights-Influence-of-Organized-Crime--97389924.html>, accessed 2 November 2010

²⁵ Institute for War and Peace Reporting, Anti-Corruption Efforts Falter in Kyrgyzstan, 11 November 2010, available from <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4ce2477b.html>, accessed 10 December 2010

Hizb ut-Tahrir operates through propaganda, while the IMU uses armed seizure of power, said Kyrgyz National University political scientist Yevgeniya Nuranskaya.

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Malikov has not ruled out that events in Kyrgyzstan might be just what the fractured IMU needs. "The transfer of IMU militants back to Central Asia began long before the overthrow, during last summer. Many fighters returned to Central Asia and are ready to again take up the previous aim of building a caliphate."²⁶

The report by *Central Asia Online* further notes,

"Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry Diplomatic Academy Professor Orozbek Moldaliyev dismissed the possibility of radicals taking power. "You need money to come to power", he said. "The radicals don't have any now. Secondly, they are more focused on ... Afghanistan and Pakistan".

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"According to ... several countries' intelligence services, a significant part of the IMU's membership with a certain Abdurakhman at their head intend to withdraw from the war in Afghanistan and move into the Fergana Valley, which includes penetrating into southern Kyrgyzstan", CSTO Secretary-General Nikolai Bordyuzha said in Almaty after Bakiyev's ouster.

If the IMU and Hizb ut-Tahrir do not interfere in Kyrgyzstan, another religious organisation will, Malikov said. "It is possible that before the Islamists come to power, there will be one or more further coups. As a result, we will get a country with strong inter-clan and, consequently, inter-religious discord", the former Bakiyev government analyst said.

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Most urban Kyrgyz are quite secular, Moldaliyev said. "I don't think they will tolerate having the IMU or Hizb ut-Tahrir in the government", he added."²⁷

A report published by *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* in September 2009 notes Kyrgyz government assertions that banned fundamentalist groups have attracted female followers,

"A year ago, residents of the southern Kyrgyz village of Nookat took to the streets in protest after being denied the right to celebrate Eid-al-Fitr in a local stadium. The authorities, blaming the banned Islamic group Hizb ut-Tahrir for staging the demonstration, arrested dozens of participants. When court verdicts were later handed down, two women were among those found guilty of organizing the protest, with each receiving sentences of 15 years or more.

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Aziza Abdurasulova, a Kyrgyz women's rights activist, notes that many women in the country are constrained by limited opportunities, compounding the difficulties of the worsening economic situation and widespread corruption. "When women struggle with difficulties in their everyday lives, it is possible that they turn to Islam," Abdurasulova said. "Because there is not any guarantee from the government, they don't see any kind of better future. So, they turn to Islam, to God -- although I don't believe they would necessarily follow Hizb ut-Tahrir and other extremists' paths."

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Hizb ut-Tahrir first emerged in the region in the 1990s with the recruitment of members in Uzbekistan.

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The group itself admits that the creation of an Islamic caliphate is among its ultimate goals, but officially rejects the use of violence. In Kyrgyzstan, the banned group was widely

²⁶ Central Asia Online, Kyrgyz instability possible window of opportunity for Islamists, 19 May 2010, http://www.centralasiaonline.com/cocoon/caii/xhtml/en_GB/features/caii/features/main/2010/05/19/feature-01, accessed 18 November 2010

²⁷ Central Asia Online, Kyrgyz instability possible window of opportunity for Islamists, 19 May 2010, http://www.centralasiaonline.com/cocoon/caii/xhtml/en_GB/features/caii/features/main/2010/05/19/feature-01, accessed 18 November 2010

believed to be active mostly in the country's more religiously conservative southern provinces.

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Taji Mustafa, Hizb ut-Tahrir's media representative in Britain, tells RFE/RL that female members of the group play an active role in spreading the organization's message among their family members and other women, as well as in recruiting new members.

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In Uzbekistan, there have been reports of widespread abuse and torture of thousands of imprisoned alleged Hizb ut-Tahrir members.

And human rights groups say the two women arrested in Kyrgyzstan following last year's protest in Nookat were tortured while in detention, and that one of the women had a miscarriage after she was severely beaten -- a claim rejected by Kyrgyz officials."²⁸

A September 2010 report by the *UN News Service* notes the UN's efforts to combat terrorism in Kyrgyzstan and the wider region of Central Asia,

"The United Nations today launched a new initiative aimed at strengthening efforts to assist Central Asian countries in their efforts to combat terrorism.

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"Central Asia is one of the most interdependent regions of the world, with a large population, a potential common market and a crossroad of energy routes," Miroslav Jenca, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Special Representative [].

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To date, the region's five countries have "been spared large-scale terrorist attacks," he noted. "Yet it cannot be denied that there is a growing concern about the possibly of intensifying activities of various extremist, terrorist, and criminal groups and networks operating in Central Asia, fuelled by instability in the wider region and porous borders through which extremism and criminal networks penetrate the region."²⁹

GlobalSecurity.org notes in its July 2005 report the history of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU),

"The IMU is a coalition of Islamic militants from Uzbekistan and other Central Asian states. It is closely affiliated with al-Qaida and, under the leadership of Tohir Yoldashev, has embraced Usama Bin Ladin's anti-US, anti-Western agenda. In June 2001, the IMU changed its name to the Islamic Party of Turkestan, and expanded its original goal of establishing an Islamic state in Uzbekistan to the creation of an Islamic state in all of Central Asia."³⁰

A *United States Naval Postgraduate School* report published in April 2008 details the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan's support base and activities in Central Asia,

"Since Operation Enduring Freedom, the IMU has been predominantly occupied with attacks on U.S. and Coalition soldiers in Afghanistan. The IMU also was active in terrorist operations in Central Asia. Government authorities in Tajikistan arrested several IMU members in 2005. In November 2004, the IMU was blamed for an explosion in the southern Kyrgyz city of Osh that killed one police officer and one terrorist. In May 2003, Kyrgyz security forces disrupted an IMU cell that was seeking to bomb the U.S. Embassy and a nearby hotel in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. The IMU was also responsible for explosions in

²⁸ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Banned Islamic Group Draws Female Members In Kyrgyzstan, 29 September 2009, http://www.rferl.org/content/Banned_Islamic_Group_Draws_Female_Members_In_Kyrgyzstan/1838996.html, accessed 12 November 2010

²⁹ UN News Service, UN unveils new scheme to boost Central Asia's fight against terrorism. 7 September 2010, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=35854&Cr=terror&Cr1=&Kw1=Kyrgyzstan+&Kw2=&Kw3=>, accessed 12 November 2010

³⁰ GlobalSecurity.org, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, 6 July 2005, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/imu.htm>, accessed 12 November 2010

Bishkek in December 2002, and Osh in May 2003, that killed eight people. The IMU primarily targeted Uzbekistani interests before October 2001, and is believed to have been responsible for several explosions in Tashkent in February 1999. In August 1999, IMU militants took four Japanese geologists and eight Kyrgyz soldiers hostage, and in August 2000, they took four U.S. mountain climbers hostage.

Strength: Approximately 500 members.

Location/Area of Operation: IMU militants are located in South Asia, Central Asia, and Iran. Their area of operation includes Afghanistan, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan.

External Aid: The IMU receives support from a large Uzbek Diaspora, Islamic extremist groups, and patrons in the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia."³¹

A March 2010 *Central Asia Online* article by a colonel and political scientist in the Kyrgyz military reserves, Toktogul Kakchekeyev, reports that the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan seeks wider control over Central Asia and is involved in drug trafficking and money laundering activities in the region,

"Given their similarities to extremists from the problem countries of Afghanistan and Pakistan, analysts are fairly confident that IMU fighters control part of the drug trafficking in Kyrgyzstan.

Weapons illegally shipped into the region for members of the IMU have found use in a series of terrorist attacks, not only in Central Asia but also bordering countries.

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One of the possible mechanisms for implementing this plan is money laundering. The money comes from sponsors who invest in the industrial and commercial sectors. This avenue could allow members of radical groups to participate directly in these countries' political life. They could come to power through nonviolent means, both economic and electoral.

Even now, some IMU supporters are said to have seeped through channels of corruption into Kyrgyzstan's law enforcement, national security agencies, army and nonprofit human rights organisations.

The present but invisible activities of Islamists have led to Central Asia witnessing an era of Islamic renaissance that joins radicalism, fundamentalism and modernism. Relying on Islamic solidarity, the IMU and similar organisations co-exist peacefully, even though they differ on Islam."³²

A *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* report in June 2010 comments on the link between ethnic violence and regional instability caused by narcotics trafficking and the presence of extremist groups in the region,

"The complexities of the densely populated Ferghana Valley, which is home to diverse ethnic groups and scarce resources, make the conflict in Kyrgyzstan especially dangerous, given the risk of violence flowing across national borders. Harsh social and economic conditions observed across all three countries sharing the Fergana Valley - Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan - make the situation particularly dangerous. Add to this the region's proximity to unstable Afghanistan, local operations of organized crime and drugs

³¹ The Naval Postgraduate School, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), April 2008, <http://www.nps.edu/library/Research/SubjectGuides/SpecialTopics/TerroristProfile/Current/IMU.html>, accessed 10 November 2010

³² Central Asia Online, IMU said to seek control over Central Asia, 6 March 2010, http://centralasiaonline.com/cocoon/caii/xhtml/en_GB/features/caii/features/main/2010/07/27/feature-02, accessed 12 November 2010

cartels, and the presence of extremist and terrorist organizations including Hizb-ut-Tahrir, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Al-Qaeda, and others.”³³

Kyrgyz news agency *24.kg* reported in July 2010 that the Kyrgyz authorities have detained suspected Islamic Jihad Union militants,

“The Kyrgyz Ministry of Internal Affairs informs that officers found members of the international terrorist groups out in Kyrgyzstan. They were detected in Tajikistan without any documents. Two men stated they are citizens of Kyrgyzstan and later on were handed over to the officers of Batken Oblast.

The investigative action revealed that the detained were active members of the Islamic terrorist organization “Islamic Jihad Union”. They underwent military training in camps for militants in Waziristan province of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in 2007-2008.

One of the detained is a 32-year-old native of Bazar-Korgon region of Zhalal-Abad oblast of Kyrgyzstan. He was wanted by the law-enforcement authorities for crimes under the Articles 297 (“Public calls for violent change of constitutional order”) and 299 (“Inciting national, racial or religious hatred”) of the Criminal Code of Uzbekistan. Second, as a 32-year-old native of Khanabad Andijan oblast of Uzbekistan, is a member of the religious extremist organization “Wahhabi”. Since September 2005 he was wanted by the police of Uzbekistan, he flew to the territory of Suzak Oblast of Zhalal-Abad region of Kyrgyzstan.

They told that they belong to a group of six people and were trained in camps for militants, and entered Tajikistan from Iran across the Afghan province of Kunduz. At the moment, the Interior Ministry together with SSNS of Kyrgyzstan (security services) conducting operational-investigative actions on this fact.”³⁴

Central Asia Online notes in a July 2010 report that analysts’ views differ as to the current threat posed to Kyrgyzstan by Islamic militants,

“While the recent inter-ethnic clashes in Kyrgyzstan’s south may be seen as an opportunity by militants, officials say any conflict will not be a repeat of events in 2000, when Kyrgyz forces were only able to defeat extremists after suffering heavy losses.

The Kyrgyz-Tajik border has been seriously reinforced over the past ten years, Batken Oblast Governor Sultanbai Aydzhigitov said. “Our officers and soldiers are much better armed and prepared than in 2000,” he said.

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IMU fighters infiltrated Batken Oblast in 1999 and 2000 via mountain passes from Tajikistan in an effort to destabilise the Ferghana Valley. Kyrgyz soldiers, border troops and police killed many of the militants and chased the rest back into Tajikistan, but suffered heavy casualties.

Deficiencies in combat readiness no longer exist, Cholponbek Turusbekov, first deputy commander of the GSNB border troops, said. “We are aware that (a new) incursion may occur. We have transferred additional border guard and army units from the north to reinforce the positions where hostile breakthroughs are most likely,” Turusbekov said. “We have grown stronger and learned the lessons of ten years ago, so we are ready for any (problems) now.”

Several militant groups already have a presence in the Ferghana Valley, and while their exact number is unknown they may number several thousand strong, Alexander Sobyenin, chief of the planning service of Russia’s Cross-Border Co-operation Association, said.

³³ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Breaking Kyrgyzstan’s Cycle Of Violence, 17 June 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Commentary_Breaking_Kyrgyzstan_Cycle_Of_Violence/2074823.html, accessed 2 November 2010

³⁴ 24.kg, MIA officers find members of international terrorist groups out in Kyrgyzstan, 12 July 2010, <http://eng.24.kg/investigation/2010/07/12/12575.html>, accessed 12 October 2010

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But Kyrgyz political scientist Mars Sariyev questioned the possibility of an incursion and noted that any third-party interference would be unwelcome.

"I don't believe in this scenario," Sariyev said. "Interethnic clashes led to the redeployment of considerable forces to the south, so any potential attack – should it occur, after all – would be repelled."

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Organisations such as the IMU or UTO are unable to stage a large-scale intervention in the Ferghana Valley, Rustam Burnashev, an analyst at the Kazakhstani Institute of Political Solutions, said. "For all I know, the IMU leaders' priority task today is to get a firmer foothold in north-eastern Afghanistan; so I don't think they may attempt to destabilise the situation in the Ferghana Valley. Besides, they are busy consolidating their organisation from within," he said. "As regards the UTO, it has long since become a thing of the past. Some individual UTO field commanders are underworld leaders today, but as a military or political force, the UTO is non-existent."

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"We should pay heed to Sobyenin's warnings, but we must check his information," political scientist Toktogul Kakchekeyev said. "We are sufficiently strong in the south and nationwide to repel an incursion. The 2000 events in Batken taught us a good lesson."³⁵

Reuters notes in an August 2010 report that experts' views differ on the priorities of the IMU in Central Asia, with some stating that Afghanistan remains its focus with regard to the militant insurgency,

"An Uzbek militant group linked to al Qaeda unveiled a new leader on Tuesday following the death a year ago of his predecessor, Central Asia's most wanted Islamist fighter, and called for a holy war in southern Kyrgyzstan.

Usman Adil described himself as the new leader of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) in a statement published on an unofficial rebel website, www.furqon.com, believed to be the group's main communication platform.

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Opinion among political analysts was divided over whether the IMU might try to infiltrate back into the Ferghana valley, where three Central Asian republics intertwine, in the wake of the bloodshed in southern Kyrgyzstan in June in which at least 370 people were killed.

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"What's very interesting in the new IMU approach is the shift in emphasis towards Kyrgyzstan," said independent regional specialist Christopher Langton.

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Paul Quinn-Judge, Bishkek-based Central Asia director for the International Crisis Group, said the initial comments suggested the IMU could maintain its policy for Afghanistan first, and the rest of Central Asia second."³⁶

Central Asia Online notes in an August 2010 article that the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan has called for violent action in southern Kyrgyzstan following the civilian unrest that occurred,

"Usmon Odil, who replaced the late Tahir Yuldashev as chief of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), has called for jihad against those responsible for killing Uzbeks in southern Kyrgyzstan.

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Kyrgyzstan regards this as a call for jihad against civilians and is taking precautions to protect the public. "We have intelligence that individual IMU militants are already in Bishkek," State National Security Service Director Keneshbek Duishebayev stated to

³⁵ Central Asia Online, IMU incursion prediction puts Kyrgyzstan on alert, 27 July 2010, http://centralasiaonline.com/cocoon/caii/xhtml/en_GB/features/caii/features/main/2010/07/27/feature-02, accessed 18 November 2010

³⁶ Reuters, Uzbek militant group names new leader, 17 August 2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSLDE67G0MR>, accessed 12 November 2010

Central Asia Online. "But no matter who heads the IMU, we are able to resist it." He did not detail preventative measures, citing security.

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Toktogul Kakchekeyev and a number of other analysts told Central Asia Online that Odil's call for jihad is solely a political effort to rally the movement, which is now divided into three camps. One has

established its own movement, Islamic Jihad; another is fighting for the Taliban in Afghanistan; and the third maintains its old objective of overthrowing Central Asian governments.

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IMU member Hamit, who refused to give his last name for reasons of personal safety, confirmed the chance of violence in Kyrgyzstan. He has been living in Bishkek for several months because the IMU planned to organise riots in the city, he said. "I came because they told me that IMU people were being transferred to Bishkek," he said. "No one has contacted me since I arrived here. The people either left or disappeared."

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Farruhi Sugdi, a Tajik scholar of terrorism in Central Asia, called the IMU's situation unenviable. "This movement may split into several more parts and acquire a local-group character, whose influence on the situation in the region will be quite minimal," he predicted. "With the death of Tahir Yuldashev, the flow of financial assistance to the IMU from the Taliban in Pakistan and Afghanistan and from jihadist organisations in Arab countries will decrease." Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University political scientist Marat Kazakpayev agreed. He affirmed that the IMU suffered severe combat losses in South Waziristan and split. "But I think that ... it may turn its attention to Kyrgyzstan. It may start some activities to show (its strength)," Kazakpayev said.³⁷

Commenting on the presence of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan in Central Asia, The Jamestown Foundations, *Terrorism Monitor* notes in an October 2010 article the challenges facing the Kyrgyz authorities in countering extremism,

"The IMU originally had a strong presence in the impoverished Fergana valley of Central Asia, where it had unsuccessfully attempted to establish a caliphate by replacing the secular regimes of the post-Soviet Central Asian countries. In practice, most of its efforts centered on Uzbekistan.

Faced with resistance after some initial success, the group was forced to retreat to Afghanistan, where the Taliban regime provided it with a sanctuary in the late 1990's. As a result of the military response by the United States and its NATO allies following the 9/11 attacks, the IMU suffered heavy losses, with most of its members following the Taliban to the Afghanistan-Pakistan frontier to regroup and raise funds. Over the years, the IMU has worked closely with al-Qaeda and the Taliban, training jihadists in Pakistan and Afghanistan and capitalizing on the regional drug trade.

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The extent to which Central Asian states, their partners and regional security bodies are capable of thwarting potential IMU infiltrations will determine the IMU's future trajectory. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are particularly weak in this regard. The two countries already experienced IMU incursions in 1998. Both states are also experiencing high levels of political instability, with Tajikistan enduring frequent terrorist attacks and Kyrgyzstan becoming vulnerable to external threats in the aftermath of the April 7 government overthrow and clashes between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in the Fergana valley."³⁸

³⁷ Central Asia Online, IMU might foment unrest in Bishkek, 27 August 2010, http://www.centralasiaonline.com/cocoon/caii/xhtml/en_GB/features/caii/features/main/2010/08/27/feature-01, accessed 2 November 2010

³⁸ Terrorism Monitor, Is there a Revival of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan?, 28 October 2010, [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=37094&cHash=06da5c4e00](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=37094&cHash=06da5c4e00), accessed 12 November 2010

An October 2010 report by *Central Asia Online* notes concerns that relatives of victims of ethnic violence in Kyrgyzstan may be receiving terrorist training abroad,

“Kyrgyzstan’s media have reported that some relatives of victims of last June’s inter-ethnic clashes in the country’s south might have headed abroad for terrorist training. Their supposed goal is to come home and take revenge. Survivors refute this assertion, but government agencies are taking preventive measures.

“According to our sources, in the wake of the conflict, some young guys have been seen learning to shoot in insurgent camps in Tajikistan and Afghanistan,” an officer of the State National Security Service department in charge of Osh city and Osh Oblast said, requesting anonymity. “We do not rule out they may organise terrorist acts sometime in the future.”

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) have sought to influence the southern situation by recruiting those – regardless of ethnicity – whose relatives died during the unrest, the officer said.

President Roza Otunbayeva warned Osh law enforcers in August that unjustified arrests, exhaustive property searches and beatings of civilians might cause afflicted individuals to retaliate. “Over 200 young men have left Kyrgyzstan for insurgent bases to receive training for jihad,” she told police and military officers. “Do you want to breed more of those revenge-takers? They’ll return to kill you. Do you really want renewed bloodshed?” Her view made local residents worry.

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“Law enforcement (officials) in Dzhahalal-Abad and Osh are on high alert,” officer Asim Nusrullayev of the Dzhahalal-Abad Police Department said. “We check all suspicious vehicles, pay visits to private homes and question people on the street.”

“The local situation remains explosive, and many people live under permanent stress. Hence the growing number of mentally unstable individuals who cannot be guaranteed against committing unlawful actions in a fit of passion,” Matikeyeva said.

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“I don’t think large-scale organised acts of violence are likely in the near future,” political scientist Nurbek Omuraliyev of Bishkek said. “But some desperate individuals might attempt to obtain truth and justice on their own.” Different Uzbek Islamist organisations might still be finding shelter in the Kyrgyz part of the Fergana Valley, Omuraliyev said. “One cannot rule out that some militants, driven by a personal desire for vengeance, might try to stage acts of terror on Kyrgyz soil in the future.”

Political scientist Sairagul Matikeyeva of International University agreed. “Terrorist acts are possible, but not too soon. They need to be duly prepared, which is rather difficult to do now, considering the continuing searches and sweeps of suspicious houses by law enforcement,” she said.³⁹

Amnesty International states in its 2010 annual report that a senior Kyrgyz official called for harsh measures to deal with the threat of fundamentalist extremists in Kyrgyzstan,

“In September, the Head of the National Security Service (NSS) openly advocated public executions, compulsory re-education and separate prison facilities for members of banned Islamic groups and Islamist parties, such as Hizb-ut-Tahrir. June and October saw clashes between security forces and armed groups allegedly affiliated to the banned Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and trying to infiltrate the south of the country.”⁴⁰

³⁹ Central Asia Online, Terrorism feared possible in southern Kyrgyzstan, 26 October 2010, http://www.centralasiaonline.com/cocoon/caii/mobile/en_GB/features/caii/features/main/2010/10/26/feature-01, accessed 12 November 2010

⁴⁰ Amnesty International, Amnesty International Report 2010, p.202, http://thereport.amnesty.org/sites/default/files/AIR2010_EN.pdf, accessed 10 October 2010

3. Population Demography and Ethnic and Religious Composition

Reuters notes in its 2010 country profile that Kyrgyzstan had a population of 5.5 million in 2009.⁴¹ A 2009 country briefing published by *USDOS* states the following for Kyrgyzstan, "Population distribution (2006): Urban 64.7%; rural 35.3%."⁴² A report issued by *USAID* states the population growth rate in 2009 as 1.4%.⁴³

Minority Rights Group International reports the following information with respect to Kyrgyzstan's ethnic and religious composition,

"Main religions: Sunni Islam, Orthodox Christianity

Minority groups include Uzbeks (14.2%), Russians (10.3%), Dungans (1.1%), Uighurs (1%), as well as groups of Tatars, Kazakhs, Ukrainians, Germans, Tajiks, Koreans, Jews, and North Caucasians.

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The ethnic Kyrgyz now make up almost 70 percent of the population. Slavs – mainly Russians but also some Ukrainians – were until recently the largest minority in Kyrgyzstan. Unlike in other Central Asian states, a significant proportion of Slavs are rural dwellers. Their numbers have however decreased rather dramatically in the last 10 years: some estimates put their size now to less than 9%, with the Uzbeks, who constitute perhaps as much as 15% today, appearing to be the country's largest minority. They are concentrated mainly in the Fergana valley in the west of the country. The vast majority of Germans have also emigrated, mainly to Germany. Jews, once numerous in the capital and respected for their contribution to health care, engineering and culture, are another rapidly disappearing group. The vast majority have emigrated to Israel, others to the USA and Germany."⁴⁴

Minority Rights Group International further notes the impact of legislative changes on the ethnic Slav communities in Kyrgyzstan in a 2005 report,

"Slavs – mainly Russians and some Ukrainians – constituted until recently the largest minority in Kyrgyzstan. Unlike in other Central Asian states, a significant proportion of Slavs were rural dwellers, though this has steadily been decreasing. Most Russians in Kyrgyzstan, estimated at around 500,000 (BBC News, 23 November 2005) now live in the capital Bishkek and the fertile Chui valley which surrounds it. They are mainly Orthodox Christians or Jews."

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The diminishing importance of the Russian language, its replacement by Kyrgyz, the growing dominance of ethnic Kyrgyz in government administration and the perceived limited employment and economic opportunities for members of the Russian (and Ukrainian) minority have all encouraged large numbers to emigrate.

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The rights of the Russian-speaking minority are in theory much better recognised than those of other minorities in the Constitution and in the state administrative structures, as the Russian language is still frequently used in government departments as a language of work and communication.

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But legislation after 2004 has made it clear that unless they are fluent in Kyrgyz, Russians will eventually be shut out from political representation and other areas of public life.

⁴¹ Reuters, Reuters AlertNet - Kyrgyzstan, 2010, <http://www.alertnet.org/db/cp/kyrgyzstan.htm>, accessed 2 November 2010

⁴² USDOS, Background Note: Kyrgyzstan, 26 October 2009, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5755.htm>

, accessed 2 November 2010

⁴³ USAID, USAID Country Health Statistical Report - Kyrgyzstan, December 2009, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADR583.pdf, accessed 12 November 2010

⁴⁴ Minority Rights Group International, Kyrgyzstan Overview, 2010, <http://www.minorityrights.org/2346/kyrgyzstan/kyrgyzstan-overview.html>, accessed 2 November 2010

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These developments have led to recent demands from representatives of the Slavic minorities for guaranteed representation and a quota system in state employment, but these demands have as yet remained unanswered.”⁴⁵

Minority Rights Group International comments in a 2006 report on the location of ethnic Uzbek communities in Kyrgyzstan,

“Probably now representing around 15% (the US State Department 2006 Country Report for Kyrgyzstan refers to 14.2% from official statistics) Uzbeks are concentrated mainly in the south and western parts of the country, especially the Ferghana valley and the three administrative provinces of Batken, Osh, and Jalal-Abad. The Uzbeks speak an eastern Turkic language which is closest to Uyghur. They are predominantly Sunni Muslim of the Hanafi school: they are descended from Turkic-Mongol invaders with strong Iranian influences. Despite their large numbers and geographic concentration, including in Osh province where they are a majority, they have tended to be excluded from exercising political power since Kyrgyzstan’s independence.”⁴⁶

A 2006 report by *Minority Rights Group International* notes the presence of ethnic Uighurs in areas of southern Kyrgyzstan,

“Speaking a southeastern Turkic language related to Uzbek, the small Uighur minority are concentrated in the southern part of the country near the city of Osh, with a sizeable population also in the capital of Bishkek. The largest concentration of Uighurs can be found in China (Xinjiang). Uighurs are mainly Sunni Muslims.

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Kyrgyzstan’s Uighur minority are the remnants of the vast Uighur Empire which towards the 8th Century stretched from the Caspian Sea to Manchuria. Eventually to be overrun by the tribes that became the Kyrgyz, most Uighurs migrated into what is now China, though some remained and occupied the western Tarim Basin of the Ferghana Valley. Their small size and relative insignificant role or influence in power struggles have meant that the Uighurs have not played a prominent role in the struggles of the 20th and 21st centuries.

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This long-standing situation has in recent years been changed by the arrival of Uighurs fleeing Chinese repression in Xinjiang. Initially, the Kyrgyz government discouraged this movement though did not attempt to suppress it harshly, permitting the operation of Uighur organisations sympathetic or even directly linked in their sympathies with the Uighurs of Xinjiang. Two such organisations - the Uighur Freedom Organization and the Kyrgyzstan Uyghur Unity (Ittipak) Association – have been warned by government authorities not to indulge in activities relating to the Uighur diaspora in Xinjiang and with the Tibet Liberation Movement because of Chinese official sensitivities.”⁴⁷

An *IRIN News* report in June 2010 provides detailed information the ethnic composition of southern Kyrgyzstan,

“Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the number of ethnic Russians has declined, particularly in the south, where internal migration has also altered the balance between Kyrgyz and ethnic Uzbeks.

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As of 1 January 2009, 69.6 percent of the population were Kyrgyz, 14.5 percent Uzbeks and Russians constituted 8.4 percent. Among other ethnic groups, there were about 60,000 Dungans (called Hui in northwest China where they came from in the 19th century and are

⁴⁵ Minority Rights Group International, Kyrgyzstan - Russians and Ukrainians, 2005,

<http://www.minorityrights.org/2351/kyrgyzstan/russians-and-ukrainians.html>, accessed 2 November 2010

⁴⁶ Minority Rights Group International, Kyrgyzstan - Uzbeks, 2006, <http://www.minorityrights.org/2350/kyrgyzstan/uzbeks.html>, accessed 12 November 2010

⁴⁷ Minority Rights Group International, Kyrgyzstan - Uighurs, 2006, <http://www.minorityrights.org/2356/kyrgyzstan/uighurs.html>, accessed 2 November 2010

predominantly in the north of the country), about 52,000 Uygurs, 48,500 Tajiks largely in the south and 38,600 Kazakhs mainly in the north, making up the balance of Kyrgyzstan's 5.3 million population, according to the National Statistics Committee.

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The population of southern Kyrgyzstan was about 2,762,700 people in 2009, according to the National Statistics Committee and the Uzbek population in that area accounts for about 30 percent, while in some districts, such as Aravan district in Osh province or villages, they constitute the majority."⁴⁸

4. Inter-ethnic Relations and Prior Conflicts and Unrest

An August 2010 study published by *International Crisis Group* states that prior governments in Kyrgyzstan have failed to tackle issues surrounding ethnic tensions,

"Successive governments have failed to address ethnic tensions in the south, or even admit their existence. Many features of the 2010 violence strongly resemble the last round of bloody ethnic clashes, in 1990. At that time there was no attempt to address the root causes of the problem, and the same phenomena burst to the surface in an even more virulent form twenty years on. During the intervening two decades, state neglect and economic decline have deepened social deprivation, increasing the pool of poorly educated and mostly unemployed young men who, in 2010 as in 1990, proved particularly susceptible to destructive rhetoric."⁴⁹

An *IRIN News* report in June 2010 details the underlying ethnic tensions in southern Kyrgyzstan,

"In common with its neighbours in Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan has a mixed population dating back to the drawing of the region's borders by Stalin in the 1920s. Most of the 767,000 ethnic Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan live in the south, in the Kyrgyz part of Fergana Valley, the most densely populated area in the region where land is scarce.

Tensions over resources, mainly land, became apparent in June 1990 when young ethnic Kyrgyz demanded land that belonged to a collective farm of mainly ethnic Uzbek. The 1990 conflict was quickly suppressed by Soviet troops.

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Before the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Kyrgyz were a minority in Osh, the main urban centre in the south. Historically they were mainly nomads living in rural areas, while Uzbeks were farmers and town-based artisans and traders. The borders drawn by Stalin that divided nationalities in the Fergana Valley were largely administrative, and did not mean much in practical terms.

After independence in 1991, the ethnic make-up changed dramatically. Many Russians left and more Kyrgyz started to migrate to Osh, looking for schooling and work opportunities following the end of agricultural subsidies and the disintegration of collective farms. Tensions rose as Kyrgyz started to penetrate traditional Uzbek economic strongholds, including trade and commerce."⁵⁰

The *IRIN News* report of June 2010 further notes,

"Under first President Askar Akaev, the approach to minorities was more "flexible", according to some analysts. Ethnic Uzbeks enjoyed economic freedom and some of their leaders were represented politically. However, they tended to be wealthy entrepreneurs, seen by many as out to further their own personal interests rather than building strategic

⁴⁸ IRIN, Kyrgyzstan - Delicate ethnic balance, 17 June 2010, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportID=89526>, accessed 2 November 2010

⁴⁹ International Crisis Group, The Pogroms in Kyrgyzstan, 23 August 2010, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/central-asia/kyrgyzstan/193-the-pogroms-in-kyrgyzstan.aspx>, accessed 12 November 2010

⁵⁰ IRIN, Kyrgyzstan - Delicate ethnic balance, 17 June 2010, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportID=89526>, accessed 2 November 2010

links between the Kyrgyz establishment and the Uzbek community.

Kurmanbek Bakiev came to power in 2005 after Akaev was ousted in mass protests. He was from Jalal-Abad in the south, and began to sideline some of the Uzbek leaders who had benefited under Akaev - in certain cases that meant the redistribution of assets and property to his Bakiev clan.

After Bakiev was overthrown in April some Uzbek leaders, particularly in Jalal-Abad, openly supported the provisional government. Since independence, ethnic Uzbeks had shied away from politics, so such statements were seen as a cause for concern among the Kyrgyz political elite, according to one Kyrgyzstan-based analyst who spoke to IRIN on condition of anonymity.”⁵¹

Central Asia Online reports in a March 2010 article that religious communities have seen a revival in southern Kyrgyzstan since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and that poverty in the region has contributed to community tensions,

“The experiences and history of the Near and Middle Eastern Islamic states attracted the leaders of Islamic organisations in the Fergana Valley and southern Kyrgyzstan. According to conservative estimates, approximately 1m ethnic Uzbeks live in Osh Oblast alone.

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Amid the chaos of the USSR's collapse, Islamic extremist organisations such as Adolat Uyushmasi and Islom Lashkorlari formed in Namangan. These organisations' early experiences opened wide the door to the revival of religious communities and their participation in the struggle for power. The Islamic Revival Party, a politically oriented religious organisation, formed in Astrakhan, Russia, and soon acquired adherents from Uzbekistan and Russia.

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According to criminological assessments from the Central Asian countries' ministries of internal affairs (particularly that of Kyrgyzstan), militants from extremist groups were involved in a number of contract killings, some of which led to a public backlash. Given their similarities to extremists from the problem countries of Afghanistan and Pakistan, analysts are fairly confident that IMU fighters control part of the drug trafficking in Kyrgyzstan.

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Even now, some IMU supporters are said to have seeped through channels of corruption into Kyrgyzstan's law enforcement, national security agencies, army and nonprofit human rights organisations.

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The present but invisible activities of Islamists have led to Central Asia witnessing an era of Islamic renaissance that joins radicalism, fundamentalism and modernism. Relying on Islamic solidarity, the IMU and similar organisations co-exist peacefully, even though they differ on Islam.

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Fundamentalists have found fertile ground for recruitment in Central Asia, as discontent bubbles up over the impoverished Kyrgyz and Tajik economies and the perceived absence of a rule of law in Uzbekistan.

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Central Asia's secular-minded political leaders may have unwittingly aided their own enemies. In recent years, those leaders have sought support by attracting religious figures to participate in various popular and political councils, including those on the campaign trail. By courting those clerics, they transform Islamic organisations into spiritual compendia of power.”⁵²

⁵¹ IRIN, Kyrgyzstan - Delicate ethnic balance, 17 June 2010, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportID=89526>, accessed 2 November 2010

⁵² Central Asia Online, IMU said to seek control over Central Asia, 6 March 2010, http://centralasiaonline.com/cocoon/caii/xhtml/en_GB/features/caii/features/main/2010/03/06/feature-01, accessed 2 November 2010

Minority Rights Group International notes in a 2006 report that ethnic Uzbeks appeared disenchanted with their situation in southern Kyrgyzstan,

“The disenchantment of the Uzbek minority has continued as the Kyrgyz authorities still refuse to acknowledge any increased use of or state for the Uzbek language, despite Uzbeks now surpassing Russians as the country’s largest minority. While there are Uzbek language schools operating in Kyrgyzstan, there has not been clear and unmitigated support from education authorities: textbooks and other materials in the Uzbek language continue to be lacking or unavailable, and various other obstacles remain in place preventing parents for ensuring their children are instructed in their language.

Despite being used in some official areas, the Uzbek language does not have any official status, even in the Batken, Osh, and Jalal-Abad provinces. This has indirectly led to the continued under-representation and even absence of Uzbeks employed in government offices. Demonstrations calling for an official status for the language and for some kind of proportional representation of Uzbeks in state administration in the southern provinces have been held in 2006.

A former governor of the Osh province alleged that he was removed from his position by President Bakiyev because of his Uzbek ethnicity. Tensions between the Uzbeks and Kyrgyz remain high, as does resentment among the Uzbeks about the control of many of the state structures and administration by the latter. These factors may also be behind the October 2006 murder of the head of the Center of Uzbek Culture in Osh.”⁵³

In May 2010 Russian news agency *Ferghana Information Agency* reported on changes in the political leadership in recent years in southern Kyrgyzstan,

“Ethnic Uzbeks in the Jalal-Abad Oblast have traditionally been more active and politicized than Uzbeks in Osh and Batken Oblasts. They expressed their support to the interim government immediately after the change of power in Bishkek. This happened in contradiction to the team of Kurmanbek Bakiev that has been strictly treating the Uzbek leaders in the south since 2005.

Unlike first president Askar Akaev, the ex-president of southern origin had strong support from the dwellers in the south and did not need the help of ethnic Uzbeks, specifically, in the issue of mobilizing the population for elections at various levels. During Akaev’s rule the ethnic Uzbeks in the south enjoyed total economic freedom in exchange for loyalty at the presidential elections.

At the moment, we observe the process of changing the political leaders that since 2005 have been mainly represented by ethnic Kyrgyz of southern origin, which also had “historical memory” of building the relations with Uzbeks while “the northern elite” had not had close ties with Uzbek community. In current situation Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in the south will have to build new relations in new realities when southern Kyrgyz lost administrative support from Bishkek.”⁵⁴

An article by the *BBC* in May 2010 comments on the possible causes behind the violence in the town of Mayevka, noting tensions over land ownership and the protection offered ethnic grips by law enforcement officials,

“In post-crisis Kyrgyzstan, restoring law and order has proved the biggest challenge for the country’s new interim authorities. There were problems with the police, as many appeared not to support their new leaders. Several protests were staged by police officers in the south

⁵³ Minority Rights Group International, Kyrgyzstan - Uzbeks, 2006, <http://www.minorityrights.org/2350/kyrgyzstan/uzbeks.html>, accessed 12 November 2010

⁵⁴ Ferghana.ru, Southern Kyrgyzstan: May the criminal fights lead to ethnic conflicts? 6 May 2010, <http://enews.ferghana.ru/article.php?id=2630>, accessed 12 November 2010

of the country and in the capital. Morale among officers has been running low - some of them feel they have been made scapegoats by the politicians.

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Sitting in his office, Bishkek's deputy police chief said the police were ready to perform their duties. [] "We do not serve the interest of one political group or another, we take the oath to serve people," he said. "We want to reassure the public that we can protect them." But some who tried to seek help from the police and did not get a response quickly enough are unconvinced.

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The roots to the violence may lie in long-term economic deprivation. Prior to the incident in Mayevka, thousands of rural poor had been gathering on the outskirts of the village laying claim to small plots of land on private property. Dozens of men and women are still occupying land near the village. They have demanded that the interim government, led by Roza Otunbayeva, give them land. "We are the sons of Kyrgyzstan. Turks have seized our land, but the land is ours, is it not?" said Syimyk, one of the protesters.

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Political analyst Medet Tulegenov said the incident in Mayevka might have been provoked by supporters of the ousted government. "Such events are quite beneficial for groups that stand behind the Bakiyev family," he said.

"It gives them certain negotiation grounds to talk to the provisional government, because the more unstable the state is the weaker the government becomes, therefore it is easier for them to escape from the current situation." In multi-ethnic Kyrgyzstan there are many villages like Mayevka where people of different nationalities have been living side by side. But there are fears that the events in Mayevka could happen again.

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Whether or not the violence was triggered by those taking advantage of temporary lawlessness to seize property, or those who want the present administration to fail, ordinary people want reassurances that they will be protected."⁵⁵

A report by *EurasiaNet* in August 2010 discusses the difficulties faced by those in inter-ethnic marriages in Kyrgyzstan, highlighting issues of discrimination and intolerance,

"Mixed marriages have been one of the hidden casualties of June's ethnic violence. Living side-by-side for so many generations, Uzbeks and Kyrgyz intermarried, especially in urban centers such as Osh and Bishkek. Many of these couples say their lives have been altered by the violence.

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Angry family members have forced engaged couples to cancel wedding plans, teenage lovers to break up, and even, since the violence, married couples with children to separate. The disquiet is not entirely new, however. Some men in Osh admit they have long hidden the ethnicity of their Kyrgyz wives from their friends.

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Conflict resolution experts express doubt that - under the prevailing, charged circumstances -- mixed marriages can help build trust. Such marriages can help foster reconciliation within the broader community only after a period of healing, said Raya Kadyrova, the director of the Foundation for Tolerance International, a non-governmental organization (NGO) in Bishkek.

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These mixed marriages remain an example of tolerance only in peaceful times, some say. "People are very angry now and I don't think that soon they will be ready for mixed marriages," said Erke Salieva, a 47-year old ethnic Kyrgyz woman married to an Uzbek man in Osh." But, one of the biggest advantages that mixed couples have is that they are very objective about anything happening involving both sides. Mixed marriages can be a good example for the community and can influence the situation [positively] because people

⁵⁵ BBC News, Kyrgyz lawlessness drives ethnic tensions, 4 May 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8651518.stm>, accessed 2 November 2010

always look at how we behave."

Conflict resolution experts say all ethnicities living in Kyrgyzstan must be treated as citizens before any progress can be made toward a sustainable reconstruction. Government policy "should be directed not at having a titular nation state, but giving one identity to all citizens," said Kadyrova of the Foundation for Tolerance International."⁵⁶

An article published in April 2009 by *Transitions Online* notes the difficulties experienced by ethnic Lyuli in southern Kyrgyzstan,

"With language barriers and little investment, the only school serving Kyrgyzstan's Lyuli reflects the tiny community's limited opportunities.

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The lack of a library may be the least of problems for the 320 students at this school in the Jangi-Kyshtak (New Village) settlement, home to about 3,300 Lyuli in the Kara-suu district of Osh province. The shabby one-story building has no heating system; students wear coats and caps in November and December, then take an enforced vacation from January into March.

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At this all-Lyuli school, there are no teachers of ethnic Lyuli origin. Nor are there teachers of English or Russian. There are no textbooks or other written learning materials in their language, which Fatima Toichieva, the principal, described as "Tajik mixed with a specific vocabulary used only by the community."

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On the origins of their ghetto community, there is no dispute. "The Soviet authorities allocated plots on the outskirts of Osh for the first 20 to 25 Lyuli families at the end of the 1950s and forced them to live there," said Adyljan Obidov, an education expert and analyst for the Civil Initiatives Support Center, an Osh-based NGO. "All primary schools in that part of the city were Uzbek-language schools, so the first-grade class for Lyuli children was opened at the nearest Uzbek-language school. Since that time they have been taught in the Uzbek language."

Traditionally a closed and clannish society, the Lyuli maintained this isolation during the Soviet era. Arsen Ambaryan, head of the Osh civil association Nashi Prava (Our Rights), which has done the most extensive studies of the community, characterized it as a "no-war-no-peace situation – you don't touch me and I won't touch you."⁵⁷

A May 2009 report by *USAID* highlights issues pertaining to natural resources and inter-ethnic relations,

"Jar-Kyshtak is a village of 2,400 people bordering Uzbekistan in southern Kyrgyzstan. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the village infrastructure rapidly deteriorated. The villagers had no drinking water, and residents were forced to drink irrigation water. Runoff from the cotton and rice fields, this water was contaminated with fertilizers and created a high rate of hepatitis A and typhoid among the villagers. Ethnic tensions also flared up when the Soviet Union dissolved. Once an integrated village, Jar-Kyshtak split into two communities, Jar-Kyshtak on the Kyr-gyz side and Komurchi on the Uzbek side.

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Over five months in Jar-Kyshtak, the community reconstructed the old drinking water system and dug 30 new wells. The whole community—more than 400 families—participated in the project. Although the local government of Komurchi was reluctant to become involved, the people of Jar-Kyshtak invited the 160 citizens of the Uzbek enclave to use the fresh water at the new wells. "No one from the Kyrgyz village prevents them from drinking our water.... We

⁵⁶ EurasiaNet, Mixed Marriages in Kyrgyzstan Strained by Ethnic Violence, 13 August 2010, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61735>, accessed 2 November 2010

⁵⁷ Transitions Online, Cold Classrooms, 23 April 2009, <http://www.tol.org/client/article/20528-cold-classrooms.html>, accessed 2 November 2010

are all brothers,” said Ganiev Alijan, manager of the water system.”⁵⁸

A June 2010 article by *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* provides an overview of the problems surrounding inter-ethnic tensions in southern Kyrgyzstan,

“Since the Ferghana Valley is divided up between Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, naturally you have a lot of Tajiks, Kyrgyz, and Uzbeks living there. But because it's one of the cradles of civilization in Central Asia, you would also expect to find any of the Central Asian peoples represented there, as well as Meskhetian Turks and Arabs. There are Uyghurs from the other side of the border that have been living in Central Asia for a long time now. There are Afghans living there. There's a big Slavic population, because a lot of Russians, Ukrainians, and so forth settled there during Soviet times. Kyrgyzstan boasts that it has over 80 distinct ethnic groups in the country, and probably every single one of those is represented in the Ferghana Valley.

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How are the effects of the Soviet Union's demarcation of the region still being felt today?

That's probably the biggest contributor to the problems today because traditionally the Central Asians were divided between sedentary (Uzbeks) and nomadic (Kyrgyz) peoples. That changed a little over the course of time, and there were two khanates and an emirate that would have included representatives of all the peoples, but no one would have recognized themselves as being Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Kazakh, or Tajik. They would more have identified themselves as being from Kokand Khanate or the Emirate of Bukhara, or something.

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What led to the outbreak of interethnic violence in 1990, and how was that crisis resolved?

The interethnic violence in 1990 was started over a water dispute. A group of Uzbeks settled on a patch of land that had water running through it -- the Ferghana Valley is also the breadbasket of Central Asia, it's the agricultural area that really feeds almost the whole population of greater Central Asia. That situation erupted. Some Kyrgyz felt that the land that was given to the Uzbeks wasn't fairly given to them.

This land dispute developed into a much wider conflict that pitted Kyrgyz and Uzbeks against each other, similar to what we are seeing today. To give you an idea of what it would take to stop this current unrest -- at the time both those countries were part of the Soviet Union and the Soviet Army had to pour thousands of troops in.”⁵⁹

The June 2010 article by *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* discusses in detail the violence in southern Kyrgyzstan erupting in 1990,

“It would be worth it to look at the 1990 violence for a second. There has been a lot of reconciliation between the Uzbek and Kyrgyz populations since 1990, but that isn't going so far as to say they put all their differences aside. This was always a tinderbox that was waiting to be lit up again. Did any pro-Bakiev people have a hand in what's going on right now? It's entirely possible, I suppose, under the philosophy that when you've got nothing, you've got nothing to lose.

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What is the demographic situation like in southern Kyrgyzstan. Do locals intermingle, intermarry? Is one group perceived as enjoying a better economic situation?

During the Soviet days, the Central Asian peoples actually got along a lot better. They had, I suppose you can call it, a common enemy, but at least a common focal point for their complaints, which was, of course, Russia and Moscow. So people tended not to recognize so

⁵⁸ USAID, Clean Water Eases Ethnic Tensions, 28 May 2009, http://www.usaid.gov/stories/kyrgyzstan/cs_kyrgyzstan_jarkyshtak.html, accessed 2 November 2010

⁵⁹ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 10 Things You Need To Know About The Ethnic Unrest In Kyrgyzstan, 14 June 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/10_Things_You_Need_To_Know_About_The_Ethnic_Unrest_In_Kyrgyzstan/2071323.html, accessed 18 November 2010

much that, "I'm Kyrgyz; you're Uzbek; he's Turkmen," as much as, "We're all Central Asians, and Moscow's taking advantage of us."

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The older community, the people who would have been 40 years old by the time the Soviet Union collapsed, still get along. Kyrgyz and Uzbeks walk side by side, they have tea at the same chaikhanas, and they get along pretty well.

The younger generation, however - and this is the under-30 people -- are much more likely to recognize their nationality - that they are Kyrgyz, that they are Uzbek. And again, they do recognize the borders. And so there is a greater idea of distinctness among ethnic groups than there was before, and you probably see a lot fewer intermarriages, for instance. And straight across the board, socially, you would not expect as much crossover between the under-30 crowd as you would between the over-30 crowd. They don't mix quite as much."⁶⁰

The *Ferghana Information Agency* comments on the background to inter-communal violence in southern Kyrgyzstan in an August 2010 publication,

"In the last months a small Central Asian republic was attracting the world attention due to political turmoil and ethnic riots. At the same time, the riots were accepted as the continuation of post-Soviet political struggle or centuries-old ethnic conflicts. Nonetheless, it is worth paying more attention to this region (and Ferghana valley in particular) in order to understand the complexity and dynamics of the recent events.

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Feruza is Uzbek. She has lived in Osh for many years. [] For Feruza and her family the ethnic differences meant only cultural differences. Her neighbors in the apartment building were Kyrgyz.

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Although she did not know the reason of riots and was surprised by the scale of violence she immediately realized that Uzbeks were the target. After several days of horror, fear and grief she returned home in order to be able to vote at the referendum on June 27 and, therefore, legalize Kyrgyz government. She does not believe it was an ethnic conflict. They have been living together for long time: men attended the same chaikhana (tea place) and mosque, women were helping each other about the house, their kids were playing together. Their ethnic individuality was additional cultural peculiarity."⁶¹

Further commenting on the background to conflict in southern Kyrgyzstan, the *Ferghana Information Agency* notes,

"After overthrowing President Bakiev there was the vacuum of power in Kyrgyzstan. The interim government counted on referendum while the son of overthrown President Bakiev tried to organize turmoil in order to destabilize situation and prevent referendum. It also has to be mentioned that the only Uzbek, holding official position under Bakiev's regime, was Kadyrzhan Batyrov. Several times Batyrov organized the protest demonstrations, demanding more rights for Uzbek minority.

Some observers view the reason of the conflict in his last demonstration. [] The international media did not pay much attention to the conflict in Osh and Jalal-Abad that was viewed as "centuries-old ethnic conflict" with unclear political motivation. Was it really ethnic and historical? Throughout many centuries the Ferghana valley has been populated by both Turkic and Farsi speaking nations. During Stalin's regime the major factor was ethnic identity. Under some doubtful process the ethnic identify of people was defined there; as a result, Ferghana valley was divided between three national republics.

⁶⁰ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 10 Things You Need To Know About The Ethnic Unrest In Kyrgyzstan, 14 June 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/10_Things_You_Need_To_Know_About_The_Ethnic_Unrest_In_Kyrgyzstan/2071323.html, accessed 18 November 2010

⁶¹ Ferghana.ru, The glimmer of hope in bloody Kyrgyzstan, 11 August 2010, <http://enews.ferghana.ru/article.php?id=2654>, accessed 2 November 2010

During Soviet era the major identification factor was the place of birth. Being the native of Bokhara, Osh and Jalal-Abad was more important than being Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Uigur or Tajik. Until Russian was the language of international communication the ethnic component was cultural, but not political phenomenon.

The ethnic identity could be also considered as the evidence of belonging to certain economic segments – Uzbeks were famous traders in south Kyrgyzstan. Such division was not an obstacle for international marriages and cohabitation. The knowledge of at least 2-3 languages was common practice. Therefore, we see integrated community that has been living in this region for many centuries, producing the region-specific common cultural space. On the other hand, the cultivation of national identities in the political field may result in the clashes.

The locals agree that ethnic component became one of the simplest factors of mobilization in addition to prejudices and rumors. This case was not the result of "centuries-old conflict", but the matter of political and criminal struggle between Batyrov and Maxim Bakiev, the son of overthrow Kyrgyz president. At the same time, another negative factor was the memories of 1990 when the local land and water conflict gained ethnic character."⁶²

Difficult economic conditions are further cited by the *Ferghana Information Agency* in its August 2010 publication as a cause of tension in the south,

"While the ethnic identity becomes more and more politicized the real problems in the region lose their spot in the agenda. High level of unemployment and lack of resources substantially prevent normal socialization of young people. Looking for job, the impulsive young men have to migrate to other regions of the republic or abroad.

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All three republics must admit they face the youth bulge. Therefore, the "ethnic" conflicts may be considered as the problem of youth that is ready to commit crimes for the sake of money and access to resources.

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During pogroms the armed crowd was very selective in destruction and robbing. However, since there are no mono-ethnic districts in south Kyrgyzstan people had to declare their ethnic identity. Uzbeks escaped to Uzbekistan, Kyrgyz were moving to north and east. During the riots people had to re-adapt their ethnic identity to the circumstances.

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The rumors and stories played significant role in the conflict. They appeal to emotions and may serve as good instrument for mobilizing people. The validity of rumors does not matter.

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Many people in Kyrgyzstan do not know how to react to violence. They do not want to admit this became possible in Kyrgyzstan, once considered as "island of democracy" in Central Asia. Many believe in democracy, peaceful state and see the reason in the political, externally brought conflict, organized by former President Bakiev, currently residing in Belarus in exile, or transnational religious movements. The fact that soldiers did not protect civilians, while some of them participated in the pogroms, is supersensitively accepted by Uzbeks. Many Uzbeks have no belief in law-based state; some others do not believe they will be able to live in peace with Kyrgyz.

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Although there are enough ethnic reasons, the source of the conflict is democratic and economic condition, but not ethnic identity. While the ethnic approach is successful in the international level, the ethnic conflict will continue to happen. The ethnic factor will remain easily mobilized until we keep ignoring the fact that most of Kyrgyz citizens do not associate themselves with criminals and want to build democratic state, until Uzbeks get real aid and

⁶² Ferghana.ru, The glimmer of hope in bloody Kyrgyzstan, 11 August 2010, <http://enews.ferghana.ru/article.php?id=2654>, accessed 2 November 2010

safety from state and until demographic and economic situation is ignored.”⁶³

A report in September 2010 by *EurasiaNet* states that electioneering prior to the parliamentary polls in October highlighted tensions in inter-ethnic relations,

“As Kyrgyzstan’s parliamentary election campaign intensifies, some observers worry it can stir up still-raw emotions connected to this summer’s violent clashes in the South.

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Bakiyev’s former minister of emergency situations, Kamchybek Tashiev, the former State Tax Service chief, Akmatbek Keldibekov – both from the South – and Bakiyev’s former chief of staff, Myktybek Abdyldayev, are prominent party leaders. Tashiev, in particular, has frequently stated that Kyrgyz are not accorded the respect that a titular nation deserves. “In Kyrgyzstan there are people of various ethnic groups and it will remain so, but the Kyrgyz are the basis of this nation,” Tashiev said in comments published in an August edition of the *Obshchestvennyy Reyting* newspaper. “All the people living in Kyrgyzstan must live in peace and accord and they have to respect our traditions, our history.”

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“As a political party we represent the interests and rights of people from all nations and layers of the population,” Tashiev said. “The party protects national interests and the culture and unity of the titular nation [i.e. Kyrgyz], which can be interpreted mistakenly as an expression of nationalistic views.”

Tashiev believes integrating minorities into “Kyrgyz culture” will help prevent future inter-ethnic conflicts, as long as they acclimate to Kyrgyz society. “Be it an Uzbek, Russian, Turk or Dungan who decided to live and make a career in Kyrgyzstan, he should know the language and culture of Kyrgyz, and respect the spirit and culture of the titular nation,” he said. “When smaller ethnicities conflict with titular nations, and try by force to get some power or political preferences in the country, it could lead all of us to a new dead end.”⁶⁴

The *International Center for Transitional Justice* notes in an August 2010 report, the historical and political tensions behind continued north/south divisions in Kyrgyzstan,

“Following its independence from the Soviet Union in late 1991, Kyrgyzstan charted a different course from that of its Central Asian neighbors. While the surrounding countries quickly succumbed to authoritarian rule (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) or civil war (Tajikistan), Kyrgyzstan began to lay the foundations for an open, competitive, and stable society.

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By the middle of the 1990s, however, Kyrgyzstan began a slow descent toward authoritarian rule under the leadership of its first president, Askar Akaev.

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The first major outbreak of violence in the country occurred in March 2002, in the town of Aksy in the southern region of Jalal-Abad, where police killed six demonstrators who had been trying to defend a local politician, Azimbek Beknazarov, against persecution by the Akaev regime.

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Despite his increasing authoritarianism, including the manipulation of elections, President Akaev was never able to neutralize civil society or the political opposition. At the end of 2004, Akaev had managed to alienate business elites, who resented the growing prominence of his family in the economy; southerners, who were angered by Akaev’s heavy reliance on northern elites, especially those from his home district of Kemin; and many ordinary Kyrgyz, whose standard of living had been stagnant or in decline.

⁶³ Ferghana.ru, The glimmer of hope in bloody Kyrgyzstan, 11 August 2010, <http://enews.ferghana.ru/article.php?id=2654>, accessed 2 November 2010

⁶⁴ EurasiaNet, Kyrgyzstan: Some Parties Playing Nationalist Card in Parliamentary Election Campaign, 14 September 2010, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61924>, accessed 12 November 2010

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Amid a general atmosphere of discontent, the fraudulent parliamentary elections of February 2005 triggered a popular uprising in March, known as the Tulip Revolution, which led to the exile of President Akaev to Moscow and the introduction of a new government, headed by an acting president, Kurmanbek Bakiev.

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A former prime minister under Akaev, Bakiev ascended to his post in good measure because of his origins in the south. After 14 years of “northern rule” it was understood that in the wake of the Tulip Revolution, which began with the seizure of government buildings in the south and the trek of discontented southerners across the mountains to the capital of Bishkek in the north, the new president of Kyrgyzstan would have to be a southerner. At the same time, it was important to allay the fears of northerners that a Bakiev-led government would ignore the interests of the north.

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The two years before the April Revolution of 2010 were the darkest in the history of post-communist Kyrgyzstan. [] The repression also targeted ordinary citizens of Kyrgyzstan. For example, in October 2008 observant Muslims in the southern town of Nookat were tortured and sentenced to lengthy prison terms after unrest triggered by the local authorities’ ban on public celebrations of the Muslim holiday Eid al-Fitr; some were wrongly accused of being members of an Islamist militant organization.”⁶⁵

The *Jamestown Foundation* states in a June 2010 report differing views as to the basis for inter-ethnic violence in southern Kyrgyzstan,

“Most media outlets described the recent violence in southern Kyrgyzstan as an inter-ethnic clash that has re-opened historical grievances among ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbek groups. Kyrgyzstan’s provisional government, in turn, accused the former President, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, of provoking the violence. Local NGO’s have put forward yet another interpretation of the conflict – that an absence of authority by the provisional government in southern parts of the country has frustrated the local population, and forced many to appeal to their ethnic and kinship identities to protect themselves at a time of great political uncertainty.”⁶⁶

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty notes in its June 2010 report some challenges of living in border areas,

“Kamol Azizov's daily routine isn't so different from that of any other villager in the Ferghana Valley: He walks to work every morning, gets his weekly supplies from a nearby bazaar, and runs errands for his elderly parents, who live just around the corner.

Except that, to complete his tasks, Azizov must trek across an international border multiple times. Azizov's native village, Chashma, is located in the Uzbek exclave of Sokh, which is located inside the southern Kyrgyz province of Batken. What this means for Azizov is that the nearest bazaar is in a foreign land, Kyrgyzstan, as is his parent's home, while Azizov's work at the local job center is located in Uzbekistan.

"My house is located less than 300 meters from the Kyrgyz border," Azizov explains. "There are some houses in our neighborhood -- my house is on Sokh territory but its veranda is on Kyrgyz territory. And there are many split families in Chashma. Parents registered as Kyrgyz citizens, their sons and grandchildren as Sokh residents [and thus Uzbek citizens], and their homes are separated by barbed wire. There are Kyrgyz border posts everywhere and it's very difficult to move around."

⁶⁵ The International Center for Transitional Justice, ICTJ Briefing: Kyrgyzstan in Transition, April 2010, http://www.ictj.org/static/Publications/ICTJ_KG_KyrgyzstanTransition_bp2010.pdf, accessed 2 November 2010

⁶⁶ Jamestown Foundation, Rebuilding Inter-Ethnic Trust Becomes Kyrgyzstan's Major Concern, 17 June 2010, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=36507](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=36507), accessed 2 November 2010

Like other Sokh residents, Azizov has become accustomed to carrying his passport at all times. "Being stopped and searched at Kyrgyz checkpoints has become a part of our everyday lives," says Azizov.⁶⁷

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reports the existence of linguistic and ethnically based exclaves in the Ferghana Valley border region,

"With 325 square kilometers of mountainous land, Sokh is the largest Uzbek enclave on Kyrgyz territory. To further complicate things, the majority of its some 65,000 citizens are ethnic Tajik.

In all, there are eight exclaves in the Ferghana Valley, including four Uzbek exclaves inside Kyrgyzstan and the Kyrgyz village of Barak on Uzbek territory. Tajikistan has two exclaves on Kyrgyz territory and the village of Savak inside Uzbekistan.

The exclaves were carved out during the Soviet era based on the main language spoken by the majority of the population living there.

Sokh, however was an exception. No one can explain how an area that had a vast Tajik majority was made an Uzbek exclave. Many people in Ferghana Valley believe the exclave of Sokh has proven to be one of the strangest creations of Soviet-era leaders.

There are 26 schools and four colleges in Sokh's roughly 20 villages. All the schools and colleges operate in Tajik. So does the local media, including a news and entertainment television channel and the weekly newspaper, "Sadoi Sokh" ("Voice of Sokh").⁶⁸

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reports that the area of Sokh in the Ferghana Valley is exposed to political tension from bordering countries,

"Sokh's unusual circumstances have made its inhabitants vulnerable to fallout from political tensions in all three countries.

"When there are tensions in Kyrgyzstan or Uzbekistan -- in Bishkek, or, for instance, in Andijon -- Uzbekistan closes its borders and intensifies controls and checks," says Bolta, a Sokh resident who did not want to give his full name. "When the Uzbek border is closed, it cuts us off too; we can't enter Uzbekistan easily. Imagine, you need to go to a funeral, or you're seriously ill and want to visit a city hospital, but you can't go there because the border is closed, and no one knows when it will reopen."

The nearest airport or railway station for Sokh residents is some 120 kilometers away in Ferghana city, which is also a provincial center. The nearest Uzbek town is Rishton, 70 kilometers from Sokh.

There are no regular buses or trains connecting Sokh to any other city. Private cars or taxis are the only means of transport, but not everybody can afford to use them.

Further adding to Sokh inhabitants' isolation, Uzbekistan closed its borders with Kyrgyzstan following the April riots in Bishkek. Sokh has also suffered from long-standing political disagreements between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

For many decades, Tajik universities were the main destination for further education for graduates of Sokh's schools.

⁶⁷ Radio Free Europe, Uzbek, Kyrgyz, and Tajik lives collide in Sokh, 3 June 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Uzbek_Kyrgyz_And_Tajik_Lives_Collide_In_An_Enclave/2061404.html, accessed 2 November 2010

⁶⁸ Radio Free Europe, Uzbek, Kyrgyz, and Tajik lives collide in Sokh, 3 June 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Uzbek_Kyrgyz_And_Tajik_Lives_Collide_In_An_Enclave/2061404.html, accessed 2 November 2010

With souring relationships between Tashkent and Dushanbe, Uzbek education officials no longer recognize Tajik university degrees. Sokh school graduates were left with no other choice but to enroll in Uzbek universities.

After severing cultural and educational ties with Dushanbe, Sokh libraries no longer receive Tajik-language books and publications from Dushanbe. The district's main library is almost devoid of any new books.

"But it's not all bad news," says Azizov. "Living in an enclave has its positive sides, too. Everyone in Sokh is fluent in three languages -- Uzbek and Kyrgyz in addition to our mother tongue, Tajik -- without getting language classes."⁶⁹

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reports in June 2010 that cultural tensions exist between Uzbek, Kyrgyz, and Tajik residents living in the Ferghana Valley,

Recent tensions between Sokh residents and their Kyrgyz neighbors over the right to graze their animals on local pastures have further complicated an already complex cultural and political situation.

Kyrgyzstan last month stopped allowing Sokh residents to graze their livestock on Kyrgyz pastureland, affecting many Sokh households' livelihoods. With pastures no longer available, having to keep their sheep, goats, and cattle penned up inside barns poses tremendous difficulties for the villagers.

Some Sokh residents reportedly responded by attacking Kyrgyz cars passing through the Uzbek enclave territory. Their Kyrgyz neighbors, in return, blocked the main highway connecting the exclave with the rest of Uzbekistan, and demanded protection.

Officials from the both sides met on June 1 to discuss the rising tensions in the area as well as other longstanding disagreements over the enclave, and managed to sign an agreement.

To ease the tension between the two countries, Uzbekistan began to withdraw armored vehicles it stationed in Sokh after a 1999 incursion into southern Kyrgyzstan by Uzbek militants.

The Kyrgyz side has yet to allow Sokh residents to use the pasture land. But Kyrgyz officials agreed to eliminate several checkpoints in the area.

"It's welcome news," Azizov says. "When we travel from Sokh to the provincial center, Ferghana, or to the nearest city, Rishton, we have to pass at least five Kyrgyz checkpoints. They stop us, check our passports and cars, and sometimes they keep us for longer. And some of them have a habit of extorting money."

"And even in my village, Chashma, when we go to the nearby market, which is on the Kyrgyz land, we need to pass a checkpoint, where Kyrgyz soldiers check us and ask for money," Azizov says.⁷⁰

An article published in March 2010 by *Transitions Online* notes the flight of ethnic Russians from southern Kyrgyzstan to the Russian Federation,

"Natasha Antonova was born 37 years ago in Osh and has lived here ever since. "It's my hometown, but I'm planning to leave Kyrgyzstan," she said recently. "Here, my 15-year-old son has no future."

⁶⁹ Radio Free Europe, Uzbek, Kyrgyz, and Tajik lives collide in Sokh, 3 June 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Uzbek_Kyrgyz_And_Tajik_Lives_Collide_In_An_Enclave/2061404.html, accessed 2 November 2010

⁷⁰ Radio Free Europe, Uzbek, Kyrgyz, and Tajik lives collide in Sokh, 3 June 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Uzbek_Kyrgyz_And_Tajik_Lives_Collide_In_An_Enclave/2061404.html, accessed 2 November 2010

Antonova, a Russian, will be joining a mass exodus of her ethnic kin, who have left the country by the hundreds of thousands since the fall of the Soviet Union. Many cite the rise of Kyrgyz nationalism, a moribund economy, and a sense of being forgotten by Moscow as reasons for their departure. A recent deterioration of relations between the two countries is not likely to help.

“After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, a hostile environment emerged in this country for ethnic Russians, which was made worse by lack of any support from Russia,” said Pavel Stolyarenko, a marketing specialist based in Osh. “The Russian Federation cut ties with Kyrgyzstan, particularly southern Kyrgyzstan.”

Kyrgyzstan has lost more than half its Russian-speaking population in the past 20 years. In 1989, 916,558 ethnic Russians and 108,027 ethnic Ukrainians made up 24 percent of the total population. In 2009, those numbers were 439,860 and 22,905, respectively, according to the Kyrgyz National Statistics office. In 2008 alone, 14,350 ethnic Russians left for Russia.”⁷¹

⁷¹ Transitions Online, Leaving Home to Go Home, 25 March 2010, <http://www.tol.org/client/article/21298-leaving-home-to-go-home.html>, accessed 12 November 2010

B. Security Situation in Southern Kyrgyzstan

1. Inter-Ethnic Violence and Conflict in 2010 and Their Causes

Human Rights Watch states in an April 2010 report that the causes of the conflict in Kyrgyzstan are deep-rooted,

“This week's uprising in Kyrgyzstan didn't appear out of nowhere. For the last several years, many of this Central Asian country's people have felt betrayed by a government that came to power promising democracy and reform, but in their eyes delivered repression and nepotism instead. A confrontation had been brewing for months, with arrests of opposition leaders and restrictions on the media prompting public protests, which escalated when the government hiked utility prices. Meanwhile, the government's heavy-handed police methods have, according to some analysts, helped radicalize a growing part of the Muslim population in southern Kyrgyzstan.”⁷²

In December 2010 *Amnesty International* reported that:

“Ethnic Uzbeks, who traditionally have been farmers and traders and speak a different Turkic language to the Kyrgyz, constitute 40 per cent of the population of Osh region and half of the population of the Jalal-Abad region. While ethnic Uzbeks and ethnic Kyrgyz live side by side in many towns and villages in the south of Kyrgyzstan, some sections of the ethnic Uzbek population, who have been settled in the region for longer, have tended to be more prosperous than ethnic Kyrgyz, who generally have come from a nomadic background. Local and regional administrative and governmental positions of power have, however, traditionally been occupied by ethnic Kyrgyz.

Recent political unrest, including the ousting of President Kurmanbek Bakiyev in April 2010, exacerbated underlying social and economic tensions in the region. These tensions, originally focusing on the perceived unfair distribution of land, wealth, political power and cultural rights, appear to have been encouraged by particular interest groups to manifest along predominantly ethnic lines. There are various claims that these groups, whose political and, therefore, economic interests in the region were threatened by the April change in government, manipulated these existing tensions in order to destabilise the region and safeguard their interests.”⁷³

UK daily newspaper *The Guardian* states in a June 2010 report that the causes of the inter-ethnic violence in southern Kyrgyzstan are diverse,

“When the five former Soviet republics of central Asia gained their independence with the breakup of the USSR there were hopes that Kyrgyzstan might achieve a semblance of responsible rule. This small country of 5.5 million people had a relatively developed civil society and free press. But hopes were dashed under Askar Akayev, a president accused by the opposition of nepotism, corruption and growing authoritarianism.

Akayev was succeeded by Kurmanbek Bakiyev in the Tulip revolution in 2005. Bakiyev concentrated power within his family and allegedly plundered state funds and secured lucrative contracts for friends and relatives. Human rights abuses were widespread as dissidents were killed or disappeared. Journalists were muzzled and often detained, and the presidential elections last July were judged by international observers as having been rigged.

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⁷² HRW, *How Not to Run an Empire*, 9 April 2010, <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/04/09/how-not-run-empire>, accessed 18 November 2010

⁷³ Amnesty International, *Kyrgyzstan: Partial truth and selective justice: The aftermath of the June 2010 violence in Kyrgyzstan*, 16 December 2010, EUR58/022/2010, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR58/022/2010/en/2e04ab9b-73e6-46a1-98d7-563198e7255e/eur580222010en.pdf>, accessed 20 December 2010

A rise in utility prices proved to be the final straw and a swift, violent, rebellion broke out in the Kyrgyz capital, Bishkek. In less than two days, 85 people were killed, the centre of the capital was looted and Bakiyev was gone.

Kyrgyzstan dropped from the headlines as a provisional government, led by Roza Otunbayeva, a former minister under Bakiyev, took over. [] Its 13 members largely failed to present themselves as a cohesive or coherent administration, or be transparent about their activities at a time of great anxiety and uncertainty. There was a lack of common ideology or strategy, as well as signs of internal discord. The decision to postpone new elections, promised for October, until the end of 2011, did little to inspire public confidence.

Analysts say a power vacuum since April has allowed opportunists to fan political tension for their own ends. The absence of strong government "has provided opportunities for clans to exploit social tension", said James Nixey, a Russia expert at the Chatham House thinktank, although he argued that the tension within the country stemmed more from poverty and social exclusion and had more of an intra-ethnic than inter-ethnic nature."⁷⁴

A report by the *Jamestown Foundation* in May 2010 notes the role of political disenfranchisement amongst the Uzbeks in southern Kyrgyzstan in the inter-ethnic violence,

"The local populace is increasingly worried about the possibility of Uzbek leaders seizing political power in Jalalabad. These concerns reflect the fact that the provisional government still lacks full support in southern Kyrgyzstan. Uzbeks constitute 10 percent of the population in the country and almost half of the residents in southern Kyrgyzstan. Similar to the other ethnic minorities, Uzbeks are under-represented in the Kyrgyz political establishment.

Some Kyrgyz experts fear that the May 19 turmoil will spread and spontaneous clashes will contaminate southern cities and villages.

Amid the ongoing unrest, the provisional government has rushed to establish Roza Otunbayeva as an interim president until December 2011. In this position, she would fulfill the functions outlined for the prime minister, along the lines of the new constitution's draft presented on May 20. By nominating Otunbayeva as an acting president, the provisional government has sought to fill an apparent power gap in the country.

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The government also announced a state of emergency in Jalalabad city and the Suzak district, where tensions have also spread. The Jalalabad turmoil reveals the complexity of political competition in Kyrgyzstan. There was no apparent reason for the clashes to turn into inter-ethnic violence.

While latent tensions among local Kyrgyz and Uzbeks have been a problem for decades, with the latter group often excluded from the political process, the desire to co-exist peacefully outweighs the urge to reach justice through violence. Importantly, these conflicting moods can be easily exploited by political leaders. Under Bakiyev, opportunities for the local Uzbek population arguably decreased with only a few leaders able to enter parliament and government."⁷⁵

UK daily newspaper *The Independent* states in a June 2010 article that inter-ethnic violence in the Ferghana Valley has persisted over a long period of time,

"Why has the violence broken out?

⁷⁴ The Guardian, War in Kyrgyzstan - what is causing the violence? 14 June 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jun/14/kyrgyzstan-conflict-background>, accessed 12 November 2010

⁷⁵ Jamestown Foundation, Kyrgyz-Uzbek Tensions in Jalalabad Fueled by Political Competition, 26 May 2010, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=36417](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=36417), accessed 2 November 2010

There is a long history of violence between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in the densely populated Fergana Valley, split between Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Poverty and unemployment are rife, fueling discontent and mistrust, and the power vacuum created by Kyrgyzstan's April revolution has allowed old grievances to be settled in the most bloody way.

Will the situation deteriorate further?

Since April, Kyrgyzstan has been teetering on the brink of chaos, and it is clear that the interim authorities are not in full control of the country. The situation remains volatile and unpredictable, and there is a possibility that both ethnic and political-based violence between supporters of the deposed president and his opponents could worsen.”⁷⁶

A report by *Human Rights Watch* published in April 2010 highlights prior events leading up to the inter-ethnic violence of 2010 in southern Kyrgyzstan,

“Over the past year, several of Kyrgyzstan's well-known opposition leaders have been charged with offenses and imprisoned. Prominent among them is Ismail Isakov, the former defense minister, who left the government to join the political opposition in October 2008. Isakov was arrested in late 2008, and in January 2010 he was sentenced to 11 years in prison on corruption charges, allegedly for providing a government apartment to his son without proper documentation. His imprisonment and sentencing prompted several demonstrations and a hunger strike.

Erkyn Bulekbaev, the leader of the Green Party, was arrested in April 2009 and charged with "instigating ethnic conflict." The authorities accused him of involvement in a clash between ethnic Russian and Kurdish people in a village of Chui province after a Kurdish man was accused of raping a young girl.

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In December, a journalist and a well-known political analyst were beaten in Bishkek. On December 16, two men wearing police uniforms beat Aleksandr Evgrafov, a journalist with the BaltInfo, a Russian-language news agency. RFE/RL reported that the two men forced him into a car and warned him "not to write 'bad things' about Kyrgyzstan." The political analyst, Aleksandr Knyazev, was beaten by unknown assailants, who stole his laptop computer. Knyazev, who works for the Commonwealth of Independent States Institute, had been critical of the government's foreign policy.”⁷⁷

An article published by the *Ferghana Information Agency* in June 2010 provides a detailed critique of the causes of the 2010 inter-ethnic violence,

“Ethnic differences are built during daily life and social interactions. In these situations, ethnic boundaries must be generated by individuals and groups through discourse and various social behaviors. The social exchanges between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in the Osh Region, for instance, are multiple and the two groups are very embedded with economic, matrimonial, cultural and religious ties. Differences, which organize ethnicity, are not in themselves a source of problems, and do not always give rise to conflict and violence. These differences are not based on stable or fixed categories (such as language or culture) that a social anthropologist could objectively isolate.

The terms Uzbek and Kyrgyz, for instance, have referred to different realities over the course of history. They meant different things under the Khanate of Kokand, the Soviet era and today's rulers. Social and political significance changes over time.

⁷⁶ The Independent, Kyrgyz gangs accused of 'genocide' as death toll rises, 14 June 2010, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/kyrgyz-gangs-accused-of-genocide-as-death-toll-rises-1999652.html>, accessed 18 November 2010

⁷⁷ HRW, Background of Events in Kyrgyzstan, 7 April 2010, <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/04/07/background-events-kyrgyzstan>, accessed 2 November 2010

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Some individuals seek to exacerbate their ethnic difference locally. In Kyrgyzstan, regional differences (for example, between Southerners/Northerners) can be more important than ethnic differences. Problems arise when the political system uses these kinds of references to establish the legitimacy of political powers.

Conflicts emerge when there is a kind of political instrumentalization of ethnicity. This can give rise to a form of hierarchy, and to the unequal distribution of political and economic wealth amongst citizens and ethnic groups. This type of perception of political legitimacy already caused problems between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in the Osh region at the end of Soviet Union.

Under the USSR, nationality was used to establish political legitimacy: one nation, for one territory in a context where the common Communist ideology unified people. Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, the increased freedom of public speech led to more nationalist discourses, all over the Union. In the Kyrgyz Republic, several different movements emerged, all demanding new sources of political legitimacy. Considering themselves second-rate citizens in their own country, the Kyrgyz sought a new balance of power: Kyrgyzstan should be ruled by the Kyrgyz.

While the Union's other sources of legitimacy were decaying, these new movements claimed more economic, cultural and political power for Kyrgyz, to the detriment of others living in this multicultural society. Uzbeks living in the southern cities were particularly targeted by this new political vision. They were mainly urban and often successful in trade. As such, they were seen as having a better economic situation than most Kyrgyz citizens, who were confined to rural areas affected by overpopulation and scarce resources (land and water). This was not necessarily an accurate vision of the situation, especially given the rural exodus, the high number of mixed marriages and Kyrgyz political and social mobility. However, for many people, this unequal view of interethnic relations prevailed.

Despite few linguistic differences, a shared religion (Sunnite Muslim) and many cultural similarities, ethnic differences between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz were encouraged by new ethnic political entrepreneurs. However, a clear distinction between the two groups is not evident. It is interesting to note the case of those accused of ethnic violence during the Osh riots in the 1990s. On trial, most admitted they had difficulty distinguishing between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz when committing their crimes."⁷⁸

The *Ferghana Information Agency* report of June 2010 further states,

"The conflict was triggered by a rumor, a minor event. A Kyrgyz woman was raped by Uzbeks; a Kyrgyz man was beaten up by Uzbeks. Given the tense political and economic context, these events took on astronomic proportions. Interethnic violence caused several thousand deaths before the Soviet Army intervened to restore an uneasy calm. Since then, after each major political shift, the Uzbek question has become a political minefield in independent Kyrgyzstan.

Maintaining or reinforcing the ethnic boundary is directly linked to the evolution of the political and economic system. Ethnic identity can be used politically by representatives of the majority (in government or political parties) or by minority ethnic entrepreneurs.

The country's independence gave credence to a system of political representation based on ethno-national identity. It was used to legitimize the supremacy of Kyrgyz citizens in the political sphere to the detriment of other population groups. Established via ethnic censuses during the Soviet time, this conception of power was perpetuated by elections.

⁷⁸ Ferghana.ru, Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in Osh - Just another local interethnic conflict?, 20 June 2010, <http://enews.ferghana.ru/article.php?id=2642>, accessed 2 November 2010

At the beginning of his mandate, President Akayev launched an intensive Kyrgyzification campaign, despite claims to the contrary. It was first evident in political circles, and then affected the privatization of economic resources. However, some non Kyrgyz, especially in the south of the country, were also given access to politico-economic power. This meant the campaign operated on two fronts. On the one hand, Akayev established an ethno-national discourse using the figure of Manas, the new national hero. This discourse flattered the majority while scaring other population groups. On the other hand, he drew on an emerging group of influential Uzbeks involved in southern political circles. This allowed him to maintain his influence in the south, while weakening southern opposition groups – an important move in a political system where regional factions fight to gain supremacy.

During periods of political change, therefore, Uzbeks are often stigmatized and held responsible for the socio-economic crises affecting the south of the country. Even during the events of April 2010, “non Kyrgyz citizens” (Russians, meskhets, and other ethnic groups) were attacked in Bishkek by informal Kyrgyz groups, which wanted to take their lands or houses.

During the Soviet era, when tensions appeared in society, the government was able to ease social relations. As it controlled economic and political resources, the government was able to influence the balance of power by using nominations to the state apparatus. Now, in the new system, the government’s legal options to influence the balance of power are few and far between. Since independence, successive governments have continued to influence economic life using radically different methods, based on cyclical expropriations and physical eliminations.

After the 2005 Tulip Revolution, Kurmanbek Bakiyev quickly put an end to the advantages gained by some Uzbeks in Osh during the privatization period. These politico-economic entrepreneurs, of which Deputy Batyrov is a good example, were gradually marginalized. The Bakiyev brothers then set about gaining control of the economy, and encouraged other “Uzbeks” to monopolize major economic resources from the Akayev administration’s former protégés. Control of the economy passed into the hands of Bakiyev’s allies.

Events took another turn when Roza Otunbayeva came to power in April 2010. President Bakiyev’s allies in the Osh region were quickly dispossessed of the advantages they had enjoyed. The situation deteriorated rapidly and tensions arose between different groups which aspired to control economic activities. An Uzbek businessman, Aibek Mirsidikov, was murdered in mysterious circumstances. According to rumor, Mirsidikov was involved in Mafia and other criminal activities. He was closely linked to the Bakiyev family, and it was even said that the President’s brother put him in charge of the lucrative Afghan drug trade and reorganizing economic relations in Osh.

The fall of President Bakiyev therefore led to a new politico-economic shakeup in the region. The current conflict was probably triggered by the rise to power of some politico-Mafia groups, and the fall of others. The groups that had flourished under the previous government were not willing to accept defeat. Adopting extremely violent tactics, they began settling scores, aided and abetted by the Bakiyev brothers. The extent of these retaliations meant the conflict finally took an interethnic turn.”⁷⁹

A *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* report of April 2010 states there are various possible root causes for the uprising in Kyrgyzstan against President Bakiev,

“The Kyrgyz are officially Muslims, but Islam doesn't have a long history in our lives. For centuries, Kyrgyz practiced their shamanistic beliefs and culture, only later mixing it with Islamic customs. They were nomads, moving from one place to another with their yurts, and

⁷⁹ Ferghana.ru, Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in Osh - Just another local interethnic conflict?, 20 June 2010, <http://enews.ferghana.ru/article.php?id=2642>, accessed 2 November 2010

this existence demanded a lot of courage. They didn't recognize any strict governing structures or ideologies. The most precious thing for them was their freedom.

Maybe that's why Kyrgyzstan is the only country in Central Asia in which the public rose up against its Communist-era leader in 1990, choosing a fresh leader for the newly independent country from among the progressive people of the time. And if we consider every occasion that the Kyrgyz people have risen up and changed their leadership to be a revolution, then we have now experienced the third revolution in Kyrgyzstan since 1990.

In the early 1980s, the Soviet government introduced new rules for maternity leave for women -- a certain amount of money and 18 months off work was guaranteed (but at a reduced wage). The move sparked a huge baby boom in Soviet Kyrgyzstan, and all the maternity hospitals were overcrowded. The result became clear in the late 1990s, when the country saw the highest-ever number of school graduates. But not enough new jobs or housing were offered by the government during the long transition period that began with independence in 1991. And this was the genesis of the "social explosion" that was the engine for the so-called Tulip Revolution in 2005 and the overthrow of Bakiev's government on April 7.

Despite the social and economic problems already wracking the country at the end of 2009 (hundreds of thousands of young people are forced to go abroad to seek work), Bakiev's government announced multifold increases in the prices for electricity, heating, and water. At the same time, a surcharge was imposed for each mobile-phone connection.

Nepotism and other corruption within Bakiev's government were additional irritants. Bakiev appointed his second son, Maksim, as chief of the newly created Agency for Investment and Economic Development.

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Further deep disappointment came in the form of unrelenting political and media repression. It was hard to tell whether organized criminal groups were involved in politics or whether politicians were involved in organized crime. Since Bakiev became president, about 10 well-known public figures - including five members of parliament - have been murdered.

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The repression continued: Former parliament speaker and opposition leader Omurbek Tekebaev was detained in Poland after police found a Russian nesting doll in his suitcase with drugs hidden inside. A member of Bakiev's staff who had had problems with the president's brother received a human finger and ear as a New Year's present. The scandals - for which everyone blamed Bakiev and his government - were too much for people to take."⁸⁰

A *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* article published in April 2010 notes the support given President Bakiev in the south of Kyrgyzstan and the difficulties successive governments have had in stabilizing the north-south divide,

"On the map it's one country, but since the first days of independence in late 1991 observers have warned of a possible north-south split. The prospect came to the fore most recently when, in the midst of a violent uprising that began in the northwestern city of Talas on April 6 and continued the next day in Bishkek, President Kurmanbek Bakiev sheltered in his native south. There, in the safety of his support base, he sought help to counter the "northerners" who had chased him from the capital.

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Previous Kyrgyz governments have been careful to include representatives from both the northern and southern parts of the country. One example was the "tandem" of President Bakiev, from the south, and Prime Minister Feliks Kulov, from the north.

⁸⁰ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *The Roots Of Kyrgyzstan's Uprising*, 23 April 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Commentary_Roots_Of_Kyrgyzstan_Uprising/2022430.html, accessed 12 November 2010

Within the temporary government running the country until elections can be held in October, interim leader Roza Otunbaeva was born in Osh, the south's biggest city and the country's second-largest, but has spent enough time in the north that many no longer regard her as a southerner. Another leader in the interim government, Omurbek Tekebaev, has spent much of his political career in Bishkek, but his southern origins could give him more weight among voters there.

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Kasymov contrasts that to what was a mainly nomadic culture in northern Kyrgyzstan. "There really was not much of an influence of the Kokand Khanate on northern Kyrgyzstan. You could say they didn't bow to the Kokand Khanate," he says. "They lived as they wished. I think this mentality and tradition is to some extent preserved. And also southern Kyrgyzstan has to a degree a local dialect and it is a little different from the Kyrgyz spoken in the north."

Kamil Satkanbaev, a television journalist and political expert in the southern city of Osh, also sees north-south differences. "It is to some extent true that people in the south are more hospitable and a little more, I would say - and not just to defend southerners, and I am a southerner - but a little more observant of how things are developing," he says. "And maybe people of the south are just a bit more patient than people in the north."⁸¹

A report by *The Economist* in June 2010 provides an assessment of the possible causes of the inter-ethnic violence that occurred in southern Kyrgyzstan in 2010,

"The origins of the unrest lie both in the recent turmoil in Kyrgyzstani politics, and in the country's history as a former state of the Soviet Union. Alone in Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan has had two "revolutions" since independence in 1991. Its bigger neighbours, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, have had, in Mr Karimov and Nursultan Nazarbayev respectively, one authoritarian leader since 1991. But Kyrgyzstanis have twice overthrown presidents seen as corrupt, nepotistic and dictatorial.

The "Tulip Revolution" of 2005 brought down Askar Akayev, a Soviet-era strongman, who now teaches maths in Moscow. However, his replacement, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, soon started following the fashion among regional leaders. Like Mr Akayev, he beefed up the powers of the presidency. (The constitution has been changed to this effect seven times since 1991.) He also hounded his opponents while tolerating the fast-growing business interests of his family, notably his son, Maksim, who was this week detained as he landed on a private plane at a British airport, seeking political asylum.

Mr Bakiyev is also in exile. After the security forces opened fire on unarmed demonstrators in April, and more than 80 people were killed in clashes in Bishkek, the capital, he was forced to flee. He was replaced by the interim government, led by Ms Otunbayeva, a former ambassador and foreign minister. It is largely made up of disaffected members of Mr Akayev's or Mr Bakiyev's regimes. The small political class is both close-knit and fractious. In an interview with *The Economist* in May, Ms Otunbayeva grumbled about the difficulty of getting her colleagues to agree on anything.

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The interim government blames the violence on the Bakiyevs. They retain support among ethnic-Kyrgyz residents of the south, the family's base and stronghold. Several times since April there have been clashes between government forces and Bakiyev loyalists. The government's case is bolstered by a recording posted on YouTube in mid-May, purporting to

⁸¹ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Future Kyrgyz Government Faces Traditional North-South Divide, 26 April 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Future_Kyrgyz_Government_Faces_Traditional_NorthSouth_Divide/2025131.html, accessed 2 November 2010

be of a telephone conversation involving Maksim Bakiyev. In it he says he intends to bring down the government by causing unrest in the south. A foreign-ministry official says mercenaries from the badlands of Tajikistan and Afghanistan were hired.

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Even if the spark came from outside - and first reports suggested that the initial cause was no more than a fist-fight in a gambling den - there was no shortage of dry tinder. In the chaotic weeks after Mr Bakiyev surrendered his seat in Bishkek, opportunistic mobs indulged in looting and score-settling across the country. In the north, around Bishkek, Kyrgyz gangs attacked enclaves of Russians and Meskhetian Turks."⁸²

The Economist further notes in its June 2010 report,

"It was in the south, however, that latent resentments manifested themselves most bitterly. Kyrgyzstan is divided both geographically—by high mountains—and ethnically []. In the north the legacy of Soviet rule is evident in a more Russified culture. Most of the country's ethnic Russians live there, but so do Dungans (or Hui, a Muslim people of Chinese origin) and some ethnic Germans. The south is closer to Central Asian traditions and is more ethnically mixed. Most of Kyrgyzstan's Uzbeks, who make up about 15% of its 5.4m people, live in the south, along with some Tajiks. Indeed, around Kyrgyzstan's bit of the Fergana Valley—the eastern rim of the ethnically mixed heartland of modern Uzbekistan—Uzbeks form a narrow majority.

This is not the first time ethnic conflict in the area has claimed lives. In June 1990, during the last days of the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic, street brawling in Osh over land disagreements turned bloody. About 300 people died before Soviet troops restored order, and a curfew was imposed for the whole summer. Mr Akayev was appointed president, with instructions to keep the country's ethnic frictions in check.

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Mr Akayev, the strongman, was a northerner. Under him southerners felt neglected and unrepresented. When the southern Mr Bakiyev came to power he appointed a northern prime minister, Feliks Kulov, in an effort at inclusion.

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Uzbeks, who are under-represented in central government, regional administrations and the army, have long felt politically excluded. Whereas historically the Kyrgyz were nomadic herders, Uzbeks were settled farmers. Now the stereotype is that they make a living in the bazaars. The two groups often have very different outlooks, for example on the role of women.

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The south is also a nest of spies from Uzbekistan—including taxi-drivers, businessmen and others, on the lookout for extremists or for other threats to the Karimov regime, such as members of a banned opposition party. The killing in 2007 of Alisher Saipov, a prominent ethnic-Uzbek journalist in Kyrgyzstan, shows Uzbekistan's readiness to meddle elsewhere to further Mr Karimov's perceived interests. Its secret service is said to have long crawled all over Osh and Jalal-Abad, the other big southern town, as if it was its own back yard."⁸³

The April 2010 *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* report also highlights religious differences between the north and south of the country,

"Contrasting levels of religious zeal are often mentioned in the debate over what divides the Muslims of Kyrgyzstan's north and south. "Many analysts and researchers remark that in southern Kyrgyzstan people are more religious than the people in the north," Kasymov says.

⁸² The Economist, Stalin's harvest, 17 June 2010, http://www.economist.com/node/16377083?story_id=16377083, accessed 12 November 2010

⁸³ The Economist, Stalin's harvest, 17 June 2010, http://www.economist.com/node/16377083?story_id=16377083, accessed 12 November 2010

But while Satkanbaev acknowledges the faithful are in greater abundance in the south, he is careful to point out that that doesn't necessarily mean they are stricter adherents. "There are more followers of Islam here than in the north, but I need to say that there are excellent Muslims in the north and I mean that in the best sense of the word," Satkanbaev says. "And they differ from a few of the Muslims of the south who consider themselves the most religious but are using various narcotics, and I've seen this with my own eyes.

The contrasts also manifest themselves in the ethnic and cultural makeup of the two regions, with the north considered more Russified and the south better reflecting the native traditions of Central Asia. As noted by Kasymov, southern Kyrgyzstan - essentially Kyrgyzstan's sector of the Ferghana Valley - is home to large numbers of Tajiks and Uzbeks. As Satkanbaev notes: "Russians, Dungans, are in the north, but here [in the south] there is not a large Russian population. Uzbeks make up about one-fourth of the population, but most of them live here in the south. I would say there are more than 800,000 [Uzbeks] here in the south."⁸⁴

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty further notes in its April 2010 report,

"Communication between north and south is also tenuous. While regular flights link Bishkek to Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Batken, there are only two usable roads through the mountains to connect north to south. It is a full day's drive to travel the 650 kilometers between Bishkek and Osh.

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For most Kyrgyz, none of the differences between north and south would be enough to lead either population to favor a regional split. There are key issues relevant to Kyrgyzstan's international relations on which there is no room for debate."⁸⁵

The *Jamestown Foundation* states in a July 2010 opinion piece that the media has made inaccurate statements concerning the causes of the inter-ethnic violence in Kyrgyzstan,

"Among others, Human Rights Watch, International Crisis Group, and Medicins Sans Frontiers have blamed Kyrgyz military and police forces for abusing the rights of ethnic Uzbeks in southern Kyrgyzstan in the aftermath of ethnic conflict.

Cases of arbitrary detention, severe forms of torture and beating have been widely reported. Kyrgyz NGO's have also criticized the Kyrgyz government for turning a blind eye to the widespread human rights abuses.

While these organizations' alarmist reporting has shed light on the injustice and devastating human tragedy in southern Kyrgyzstan, they largely fail to place such reporting in a broader context. Underfinanced, underequipped and poorly trained Kyrgyz military and police forces lack experience in dealing with ethnic conflict.

As the violence erupted in Osh on June 10, the security forces acted chaotically, short of credible information and clear political leadership. A credible investigation should show how Kyrgyz security structures behaved during the bloodshed and prove that acts of violence were conducted as a result of ethnic hatred and not organizational flaws. Meanwhile, by presenting an incomplete picture, international human rights activists risk distorting an already complicated situation in Kyrgyzstan."⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Future Kyrgyz Government Faces Traditional North-South Divide, 26 April 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Future_Kyrgyz_Government_Faces_Traditional_NorthSouth_Divide/2025131.html, accessed 2 November 2010

⁸⁵ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Future Kyrgyz Government Faces Traditional North-South Divide, 26 April 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Future_Kyrgyz_Government_Faces_Traditional_NorthSouth_Divide/2025131.html, accessed 2 November 2010

⁸⁶ Jamestown Foundation, Alarmist International Reporting Alienates Armed Forces and Challenges Stability in Kyrgyzstan - The Jamestown Foundation, 22 July 2010, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=36652](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=36652), accessed 12 November 2010

A July 2010 report by *EurasiaNet* discusses various possible causes for the violence experienced in southern Kyrgyzstan in 2010 including power struggles between criminal networks,

“Criminal networks have long maintained a strong presence in southern Kyrgyzstan, given the region’s status as a trade hub.

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Some experts believe that a breakdown of state authority in the region in the months leading up to the mid-June violence helped touch off an underworld turf war, which, in turn, played a key role in inciting broader inter-ethnic violence. Others say gangs simply reacted to the violence, using the inter-ethnic clashes as cover for their own actions, which were aimed at altering the local criminal balance-of-power.

Kyrgyzstan’s criminal networks generally fit into one of two categories, local experts tell *EurasiaNet.org*. The first – prison-based hierarchical networks – comprise professional criminals who follow an established code of conduct.

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Athletes – sportsmen, in local parlance – form the second type of networks. These groups are widely believed to engage in racketeering, money laundering, drug trafficking and fraud. Their leaders reportedly fund youth sports clubs, leisure facilities and private enterprises to attract crowds of young and unemployed men.

Osh-based observers, speaking to *EurasiaNet.org* on condition of anonymity due to fear of repercussions, say that while various links between the two types of networks exist, the sportsmen-led networks do not have the same kind of clearly delineated hierarchy and strong code of conduct that exists in the prison networks. Sportsmen are also known to lend muscle to Kyrgyz political factions during protests, and to form groups along ethnic lines.

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Sabyr, an economics professor at an Osh university who also spoke on the condition that only his first name is printed, contended that there was only tenuous evidence to support the hypothesis that criminal groups initiated the mid-June violence. But he acknowledged former president Kurmanbek Bakiyev’s demise destroyed a fragile balance and unleashed a power struggle among various criminal gangs.”⁸⁷

The New York Times notes in a June 2010 report that Kyrgyz officials did not provide coherent explanations for the causes of the violence in the south,

“Two weeks after thousands are thought to have died in a wave of ethnic violence in southern Kyrgyzstan, and days before a national referendum on a new constitution, the interim government here has yet to provide a convincing explanation of why it occurred - a reflection, experts and former officials say, of the leadership’s inner turmoil and a possible portent of troubles to come.

The victims, mostly minority Uzbeks, say they were attacked by the Kyrgyz military and the police, and their accounts have been backed up by independent observers. Yet the loose coalition of political figures who took power here in April after a popular uprising is so weak, these experts and former officials say, that it could be toppled if it acknowledges that it lacks control over the police and the army.

The government has offered a variety of explanations blaming groups and people from outside the country - particularly the former president, Kurmanbek S. Bakiyev, who is in exile in Belarus - and has denied that its soldiers were involved.

“It is very useful for them to say it was caused by people outside of Kyrgyzstan,” Mars Sariyev, a political analyst with the Institute of Social Policy, a think tank in Bishkek, the capital, said in an interview. It is far more convenient than admitting the reality, he said,

⁸⁷ *EurasiaNet*, What Role Did Crime Kingpins Play in Southern Kyrgyzstan’s Violence, 23 July 2010, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61591>, accessed 12 November 2010

which is that “when the interethnic violence began, the police and army took part on the side of the Kyrgyz.”

In the meantime, continued persecution of Uzbeks in the south by the police has suggested a lack of control or even a pandering to rising Kyrgyz nationalism - perhaps in an effort to win passage of the constitutional referendum scheduled for Sunday, which would keep the interim president, Roza Otunbayeva, in power.

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Last week, the head of the country's national security agency issued a statement saying that the younger son of Mr. Bakiyev, Maksim Bakiyev, had hired Islamic radicals from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, a group with ties to the Taliban, to infiltrate Uzbek neighborhoods and stoke conflict. The statement said the Islamic radicals fired rifles at civilians and then hid, only to reappear in other areas.

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Mr. Sariyev and former government officials say that the new leaders stumbled early in their rule by failing to quickly win over the police or oust commanders appointed by the former president. Bolot E. Sherniyazov, the interior minister, acknowledged difficulties assuming command of the police, but he asserted in an interview on Saturday that he was now largely in control. “I am in command of 80 percent of the Ministry of Interior,” he said. “The other 20 percent is still waffling.”⁸⁸

EurasiaNet states in a July 2010 article that those in southern Kyrgyzstan question the role of Islamic fundamentalism is alleged to have played in the violence of 2010,

“Imam Rashod qori Kamalov tells the roughly 2,000 Uzbeks here not to think of themselves as Uzbeks and others as Kyrgyz. “We're Muslims first,” he says. “Islam compels us to be brothers.” It's a tough sell. Most of the victims of the violence that killed at least 316 people last month were Uzbek. It was mainly Uzbeks who fled the region -- tens of thousands of them, across the border to refugee camps in Uzbekistan, with hundreds of thousands displaced internally -- after ethnic clashes.

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Officials accuse banned Islamic groups of taking part in the violence. Melis Myrzakmatov, the mayor of Osh, the city at the epicenter of the violence, says “bearded men yelling 'Allahu Akbar’” were seen among crowds of Uzbek attackers. But after his sermon, Kamalov says there has been no evidence so far to back the claims, which he says are dangerous and are fueling deeper antagonisms. “These statements they make in Bishkek and down here in the south about the involvement of the faithful in the events in Osh are an insult to Muslims,” Kamalov says.

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President Rosa Otunbaeva has promised a thorough investigation by a government committee she says will include international experts. But few believe the authorities will dispel the growing myths and conspiracy theories surrounding the events.

One of the groups the government blames for the violence is Hizb-ut Tahrir, a banned Islamic group that advocates the creation of an Islamic caliphate in Central Asia through peaceful means. One member, who refuses to give his name, echoes the opinions of others, saying the government has produced no evidence to connect his group to last month's events. [] He says that although Uzbeks are upset about the accusations against them, it hasn't affected Hizb-ut Tahrir's recruitment drive. “We're always signing up new members,” he says. “The accusations don't make much difference either way.”⁸⁹

In December 2010 *Amnesty International* expressed concern that ethnically based narratives and myths about the causes of violence were going unchallenged,

⁸⁸ The New York Times, After Kyrgyz Unrest, a Question Lingers - Why? 26 June 2010,

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/27/world/asia/27kyrgyz.html?ref=kyrgyzstan>, accessed 18 November 2010

⁸⁹ EurasiaNet, Wary Locals Question Allegations Of Islamist Role In Kyrgyzstan's Ethnic Violence, 24 July 2010, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61598>, accessed 2 November 2010

“Six months after the violence which tore through parts of southern Kyrgyzstan in four swift devastating days in June 2010, leaving hundreds dead and hundreds of thousands fleeing their homes, Amnesty International is concerned that the Kyrgyzstani authorities are failing to establish the truth about what happened and provide justice for the thousands of victims of the serious crimes and human rights violations that took place.

Establishing the truth about the June violence and its aftermath and pursuing accountability in fair and transparent procedures for the human rights violations committed is important for Kyrgyzstan both politically and to strengthen the rule of law nationally and internationally. For all the thousands who suffered human rights violations, accountability is crucial to ensuring that justice is not only done, but seen to be done. For the country as a whole, an objective account of what happened is urgently needed to replace the distortions and myths that have built up around the June violence and which can only exacerbate underlying social and ethnic tensions.

In the weeks and months following the violence the interim government and the President took a number of steps suggesting recognition of these urgent needs. Very quickly, an Interdepartmental Investigative Working Group was established under the General Prosecutor’s Office, to oversee and lead the criminal investigations and prosecutions into the June violence. In July, a National Commission of Inquiry was established. Finally, in October, an International Independent Commission of Inquiry was mandated by the President of the Kyrgyzstani Republic to “investigate the facts and circumstances of these events” and “to make recommendations, in particular on accountability measures”.

To date, however, the development of contradictory, ethnically biased narratives about the origins and the perpetrators of the violence has gone largely unchallenged and unchecked. Indeed, rather than being corrected and moderated by an independent and impartial inquiry capable of shedding light on the disputed facts, these narratives have themselves heavily influenced the inquiry currently being conducted by the national authorities. There is now very little expectation, either within certain communities in Kyrgyzstan or internationally, that this inquiry will be capable of offering comprehensive and impartial findings.”⁹⁰

However *Amnesty International* further report that some reports that some violent incidents were ethnically motivated

“Testimonies collected by domestic and international non-governmental organizations, including Amnesty International, indicate that some of the attacks, both on property and person, may have been ethnically motivated.

Violence was reportedly perpetrated by both ethnic Uzbek and ethnic Kyrgyz groups and individuals and both Kyrgyz and Uzbek properties were destroyed. However, the attacks appear to have disproportionately targeted Uzbeks. Research indicates that traditional Uzbek neighbourhoods were most severely affected. In several neighbourhoods, eyewitness reports from inhabitants, journalists and human rights groups claimed that virtually all ethnic Uzbek homes were targeted and mostly destroyed, while homes belonging to ethnic Kyrgyz remained untouched. According to what Amnesty International saw in Osh and Jalal-Abad three months after the violence, the destruction in the worst-hit neighbourhoods affected mostly Uzbek homes and businesses. Large-scale destruction was confined to parts of five predominantly Uzbek neighbourhoods in Osh. In Jalal-Abad and in Bazar-Korgan the worst of the destruction and violence was also confined to some of the traditional, predominantly Uzbek, neighbourhoods.

⁹⁰ Amnesty International, Kyrgyzstan: Partial truth and selective justice: The aftermath of the June 2010 violence in Kyrgyzstan, 16 December 2010, EUR58/022/2010, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR58/022/2010/en/2e04ab9b-73e6-46a1-98d7-563198e7255e/eur580222010en.pdf>, accessed 20 December 2010

Throughout Osh, scores of homes and businesses were spray-painted to indicate the ethnicity/ethnic origin of the owners. The houses and businesses of ethnic Uzbeks were often marked with the word “sart”, a derogatory term which indicates Uzbek ethnicity/ethnic origin. The houses and businesses with spray-painted signs reading “Kyrgyz,” or “KG” and “KZ” (or signs indicating other ethnicities, such as Tartar or Russian) were untouched, while other buildings were destroyed. It is not clear whether these signs were painted by the owners of the properties to protect their homes or by the perpetrators so as to identify which houses to attack. Many markings were painted over, often crudely, in the aftermath of the violence.

Amnesty International also saw buildings marked with acronyms of Kyrgyz districts in Osh city or Kyrgyz villages outside Osh city. Local sources explained to Amnesty International that these signs were made to demarcate territory and to proclaim “ownership of the destruction”. For example, destroyed buildings marked with the acronym for Alai (a predominantly Kyrgyz populated mountainous district to the south-east of Osh city) were located in Uzbek neighbourhoods on the access route from Alai to Osh. Similarly those marked “HBK” (a district in the north-west of Osh city) were found in Uzbek mahallas most easily accessible from that part of the city.”⁹¹

2. Specific incidents in Southern Kyrgyzstan (Chronology of Events)

In December 2010 *Amnesty International* summarized accounts of the violence in June 2010,

“The violence started in the evening of 10 June, reportedly as a result of clashes between rival gangs of mostly Kyrgyz and Uzbek youths. The clashes rapidly escalated into large-scale arson, looting and violent attacks, including sexual violence and killings, in mainly Uzbek populated districts in Osh, Jalal-Abad and some of the surrounding towns and villages.

The worst of the violence took place between 10 and 14 June. At least 1,900 people were severely injured and needed hospitalization, with the majority hurt in the first three days of the violence. Hundreds of people died in the first days, including children, women, the elderly and disabled. Law enforcement officials were among the dead and injured. The violence was described by eye witnesses of different ethnic origins and nationalities as particularly brutal at times with reports of people being burned alive, decapitated, and sexually assaulted. Local organizations reported a preliminary figure of 1,553 houses burned down in the regions of Osh and Jalal-Abad, over two-thirds of which were in Osh. Each house would have been home to between five and seven people, on average. Schools, businesses and commercial buildings were also targeted. Satellite images of Osh obtained by Amnesty International revealed that 1,807 building in Osh alone were totally destroyed, with others severely damaged. Satellite images revealed the presence of multiple “SOS” signs painted on roads in Uzbek neighbourhoods throughout Osh, including Cheremushki, one of the worst affected mahallas, narrow streets of low rise traditional houses in walled courtyards predominantly inhabited by Uzbeks, indicating the presence of distressed local populations.

Some 400,000 people, both Kyrgyz and Uzbek, fled their homes. Up to 100,000 refugees, mostly Uzbek women and children and the elderly, fled across the border to Uzbekistan where they were given temporary shelter before being returned to Kyrgyzstan at the end of June.”⁹²

⁹¹ Amnesty International, Kyrgyzstan: Partial truth and selective justice: The aftermath of the June 2010 violence in Kyrgyzstan, 16 December 2010, EUR58/022/2010, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR58/022/2010/en/2e04ab9b-73e6-46a1-98d7-563198e7255e/eur580222010en.pdf>, accessed 20 December 2010

⁹² Amnesty International, Kyrgyzstan: Partial truth and selective justice: The aftermath of the June 2010 violence in Kyrgyzstan, 16 December 2010, EUR58/022/2010, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR58/022/2010/en/2e04ab9b-73e6-46a1-98d7-563198e7255e/eur580222010en.pdf>, accessed 20 December 2010

A report by the *International Crisis Group* connects the political unrest that occurred in Jalabad in May 2010 to the weak governance of the interim Kyrgyz government after the overthrow of the Bakiev regime,

“On 7 April 2010, following several months of intensifying anti-government protests, President Kurmanbek Bakiyev was overthrown after street clashes in Bishkek that left 86 people dead. A few weeks earlier, a group of opposition leaders had formed the Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the People’s Kurultay (assembly) to coordinate the protests. On 7 April the CEC assumed power, with Roza Otunbayeva as president, declaring that it would stay in office for six months to oversee a new constitution and both parliamentary and presidential elections planned for October 2010. Popular expectations were low, as many new leaders had previously served the old regime, and the opposition has long been bedevilled by infighting.

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In mid-May a wave of political unrest hit Jalalabad city, about one hour’s drive from Osh, and the home of former President Bakiyev and his family. At the time the complicated skein of events, with their back and forth of allegation and counter-allegation, were ignored by most observers inside and outside Kyrgyzstan. This was deeply unfortunate. May in Jalalabad prefigured June in Osh: the unreliability of the police and state security structures; the passivity or impotence of central government; Kyrgyz fears of resurgent Uzbek assertiveness; the dominant role played by individual political parties, groups or individuals; and the sharply differing, confusing and highly partisan accounts of events.”⁹³

A *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* report published on 14 May 2010 notes the events surrounding clashes between the supporters of the former President Bakiev and those that back the interim government in the south,

“Kyrgyz authorities say at least one person has died in clashes in the south of the country between supporters of the interim government and loyalists of ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiev. Later in the day, interim authorities said they had regained control across the region after pro-Bakiev supporters occupied provincial government buildings in at least three cities. The Health Ministry said 63 others were injured during clashes in Jalal-Abad.

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The clashes came as supporters of the interim government retook control of government buildings in all three southern provinces -- Jalal-Abad, Osh, and Batken -- that had been occupied by Bakiev loyalists on May 13. The interim government later said it had arrested the organizers of the May 13 unrest.

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Prosecutor-General Baytemir Ibraev said the clashes had revealed a new threat to the country's stability. "To our great regret, the main threat to Kyrgyzstan is not terrorists, not religious extremists, but Bakiev and his close circle," Ibraev said. Gunfire was heard in the city of Jalal-Abad early on May 14 as supporters of the interim government tried to retake the provincial government building from a pro-Bakiev crowd.

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Our correspondent said said hundreds of Bakiev supporters had gathered in front of the provincial government building, while a crowd of interim government supporters was standing some 350 meters away, around the city's cinema. Bakiev loyalists took control of Jalal-Abad's government office after protest demonstrations on May 13. Protesters forced the provincial governor - appointed by the interim government - to flee and reinstated a former, pro-Bakiev governor and his deputy.

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Elsewhere in the south, the interim government reinstated its authority in Osh and Batken provinces, hours after pro-Bakiev protesters briefly occupied local administrative buildings in both cities.”⁹⁴

⁹³ International Crisis Group, *Kyrgyzstan - A Hollow Regime Collapses*, 27 April 2010, http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/files/asia/central-asia/kyrgyzstan/193_the_pogroms_in_kyrgyzstan.ashx, accessed 18 November 2010

⁹⁴ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *Government Regains Control In South Kyrgyzstan*, 14 May 2010,

A further report by *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* on 14 May 2010 notes the arrest of two Kyrgyzstan politicians on suspicion of organizing uprisings by Bakiev supporters in the south of the country that began on May 13th,

“The former chief of staff of ousted Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiev and the leader of the country's Communist Party have been arrested in Bishkek, [].

Usen Sydykov, who was a Bakiev adviser from 2006 to 2008, and Communist leader Iskhak Masaliev were arrested on suspicion of organizing uprisings by Bakiev supporters in the south of the country that began on May 13.

Kyrgyzstan's national television company broadcast a recorded telephone conversation that is allegedly between Sydykov and Masaliev in which the two interlocutors discuss coordinating the protests in the three southern cities during which the administration buildings were taken over by pro- Bakiev supporters.

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Sydykov was one of the leaders of the 2005 Tulip Revolution that brought Bakiev to power. He is the head of the New Kyrgyzstan party and is considered one of the most powerful politicians in Kyrgyzstan.

Disorder broke out in Osh on May 13 and spread to Batken and Bakiev's home region of Jalal-Abad. The protests turned violent today when hundreds of Bakiev supporters clashed with hundreds of supporters of the interim government. At least one person died of his wounds and three others are reportedly in serious condition. Dozens of others were injured, several with gunshot wounds.”⁹⁵

A report by the *Jamestown Foundation* of 19 May 2010 notes further violence occurred in Jalalabad days after the initial violence between rival groups was surprised,

“May 19 was another day of turmoil in Kyrgyzstan. Roughly 1,500 people marched towards Jalalabad's private university, demanding the provisional government terminate support for Kadyrzhan Batyrov, an ethnic Uzbek and one of the leading members of the Uzbek diaspora who founded the school. Reportedly, the crowds consisted of ethnic Kyrgyz. Local media reports also suggested that hundreds of local Uzbeks mobilized to resist the crowds. Two ethnic Kyrgyz were shot and killed, and over 60 were injured as a result of the clashes.

Batyrov enjoys strong political influence and is among the wealthiest entrepreneurs in Jalalabad. He has been a devoted supporter of the provisional government and is believed to be the key person shooting at protestors in Jalalabad on May 19. He claimed that previous riots in Jalalabad were instigated by a criminal leader known as “Black Aibek” who is allegedly supported by the former President, Kurmanbek Bakiyev's, family members. As the provisional government continued accusing Bakiyev supporters of involvement in the unrest on May 19, Batyrov showed that he is willing to defend the provisional government.”⁹⁶

A report dated 20 May 2010 published by *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* details further violence occurring in southern Kyrgyzstan,

“Thousands of people have rallied in the southern Kyrgyz city of Jalal-Abad as tensions persist following deadly ethnic disturbances there on May 19.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Reports_Clashes_Erupt_In_South_Kyrgyzstan_/2041771.html, accessed 12 November 2010

⁹⁵ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Two Kyrgyz Politicians Arrested For Role In Southern Unrest, 14 May 2010,

http://www.rferl.org/content/Two_Kyrgyz_Politicians_Arrested_For_Role_In_Southern_Unrest/2042465.html, accessed 18 November 2010

⁹⁶ Jamestown Foundation, Kyrgyz-Uzbek Tensions in Jalalabad Fueled by Political Competition, 26 May 2010,

[http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=36417](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=36417), accessed 2 November 2010

RFE/RL's correspondent at the scene, Rysbai Abdraimov, said some of the estimated 5,000 people gathered at the city's horse track assaulted the regional governor, Bektur Asanov, who had gone to talk to the crowd together with the country's acting defense minister, Ismail Isakov.

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"Like [May 19], protesters demanded Kadyrzhan Batyrov's arrest. They also demanded that the authorities find the weapons [that were used in the recent violence] and find those who shot at protesters on May 14 and May 19," Abdraimov says. "As you know, two people were shot dead here."

Abdraimov said the protesters maintained they were not supporters of ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiev. There has been persistent unrest in southern Kyrgyzstan following Bakiev's ouster in violent protests last month. At least one person was killed in Jalal-Abad on May 14, when pro-Bakiev protesters briefly took over local government buildings in Jalal-Abad as well as neighboring Batken and Osh provinces. The interim government has declared a state of emergency and blamed Bakiev's supporters for fueling interethnic tensions.⁹⁷

A *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* report of 31 May 2010 notes the blockade of an ethnic Uzbek enclave in southern Uzbekistan,

"About 500 residents of the town of Batken in southern Kyrgyzstan today blocked the main highway connecting an Uzbek exclave with Uzbekistan, [].

The protesters demanded security for Kyrgyz citizens crossing the Sokh exclave. They said that since May 26, about 10 Kyrgyz cars have been attacked and damaged by inhabitants of Khushiyar, a second Uzbek exclave in southern Kyrgyzstan.

The Uzbek authorities are reported to have sent hundreds of security forces, police, and military troops to Sokh over the weekend. Sokh is one of the largest Uzbek exclaves in the south of Kyrgyzstan. Its population is primarily Tajik and Uzbek.

The Uzbek authorities closed the border with Kyrgyzstan after the mass unrest in Kyrgyzstan in April that toppled Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiev. The border closure affected Uzbek citizens living in the Uzbek exclaves who use summer pastures on Kyrgyz territory outside those exclaves. The local Kyrgyz authorities stopped allowing the residents of Sokh to use that pasture land, which led to clashes between the local population and Kyrgyz citizens traveling through the exclave."⁹⁸

IRIN News also reports on the events in the ethnic enclave of Sokh in an article published on 6 June 2010,

"Confrontation last week between the residents of two villages on both sides of the border of an Uzbek enclave in Kyrgyzstan highlights the risk of further conflict over the use of natural resources in Ferghana Valley, according to analysts.

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Over the past week, local media reported sporadic violence between some Kyrgyz residents of Sogment village passing through Hushyar village in the Uzbek enclave of Sokh. Sogment residents said about 10 cars belonging to them were damaged by Hushyar villagers and drivers and passengers were beaten up. Kyrgyz villagers reportedly blocked the road linking the enclave with the Uzbek mainland.

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⁹⁷ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Fresh Rally As Tensions Continue In South Kyrgyzstan, 20 May 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Tensions_Continue_In_Southern_Kyrgyzstan_/2047765.html, accessed 12 November 2010

⁹⁸ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Kyrgyz Protesters Block Road From Uzbek Exclave, 31 May 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Kyrgyz_Protesters_Block_Road_From_Uzbek_Enclave/2058158.html, accessed 12 November 2010

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On 1 June, 500-1,000 people, mainly men, gathered on each side of the enclave border ready for confrontation. Following a meeting between the heads of border services, respective governors and local administration officials the two sides agreed to implement a series of measures to ease tensions and from 2 June the border posts were re-opened.

Aldasheva said the disputed pastures are in Kyrgyz territory. "However, as the Uzbeks have not made an agreement with Kyrgyzstan on this issue, local Uzbek residents cannot graze their cattle on those pastures anymore," Aldasheva said. "Despite that, they have demanded free access to them quite aggressively."

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Analysts said that the underlying cause of the tension - disputed borders - needed to be resolved.

"Conflicts on the Uzbek-Kyrgyz border have always been there and it is no wonder. Unless the issue of border demarcation and delimitation is resolved such clashes will continue to erupt," local analyst Marat Kazakpayev told IRIN in the Kyrgyz capital, Bishkek. However, he said it was not likely that the recent incident in Sokh enclave would escalate into something major."⁹⁹

A report published by the *Agence France Press* on 10 June 2010 details the day's violent events,

"Kyrgyzstan's interim government declared a state of emergency and a curfew in the south of the country from Friday, after fresh ethnic violence in the region.

"Clashes and exchanges of fire between groups of youths took place overnight Thursday to Friday in Och and the neighbouring districts of Karassu, Arava and Uzgen," government spokesman Farid Niyazov told AFP. The authorities sent armoured vehicles to the scenes of the violence in a bid to restore order, he added.

"A state of emergency has been declared in Och and these districts from June 11 (Friday) until June 20," said Niyazov. Interior Minister Bolot Cher and Defence Minister Ismail Issakov had both travelled to Och, he added.

Witnesses said brawls had broke out between ethnic Kyrgyz and ethnic Uzbek groups in Och, which was the stronghold of the former president Kurmanbek Bakiyev, who was overthrown in April. "About a thousand youths armed with batons and stones gathered Thursday evening in the centre of Och," one local, Azamat Ussmanov, told AFP.

"They broke shop windows and the windows of residential buildings, burned cars. Several fires broke out in the town," he added. A local police spokesman said they had sent several units out to try to restore order.

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These latest clashes come just a few days after the government lifted the state of emergency in the neighbouring district of Suzak. The authorities imposed the restrictions there from May 19 to June 1 following violence demonstrations. They also cancelled the presidential election, which had been scheduled for this autumn."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ IRIN News, Concerns over tension in Uzbek enclave border areas, 6 June 2010, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportID=89380>, accessed 12 November 2010

¹⁰⁰ Agence France Press, Kyrgyz declares state of emergency after clashes, 10 June 2010, <http://www.afp.com/afpcom/en/>, accessed 12 November 2010

A report dated 12 June 2010 by *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* details the events of the previous two days in southern Kyrgyzstan,

“Kyrgyzstan’s interim authorities have mobilized army reserves and authorized troops to shoot to kill in the southern cities of Jalal-Abad and Osh, where at least 79 people have died in three days of violence.

The Kyrgyz Health Ministry has said that in addition to those killed, more than 1,060 people have been injured since the clashes began late on June 10 in the city of Osh and nearby areas. Late on June 12, the violence was reported to have spread to Jalal-Abad, where a mob burned a university and took over a police station, []. Thousands of ethnic Uzbeks are reported fleeing the cities.

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Reports said there are also concerns about a shortage of food due to the unrest. The interim government announced a curfew and a state of emergency in the southern city of Jalal- Abad and Osh, and agreed that security forces could use lethal force to defend civilians.

Roza Otunbaeva, the head of Kyrgyzstan's interim government, told reporters today there are "some inside forces" who want to destabilize the country.

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The clashes between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbek youth have spilled over into battles between bigger groups as law enforcement to restrain them. The interim government has declared a state of emergency in the area after sending in troops along with armored vehicles and helicopters hours after the violence broke out in the south.

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RFE/RL’s Kyrgyz Service correspondent in Osh, Alisher Toksonbaev, says gunfire can still be heard in the city today, and that many Osh residents are fleeing the city.

"There are barricades everywhere in the city [made by local people], and they don't let journalists pass," Toksonbaev said. "Highways connecting Osh with Jalal-Abad province are almost completely closed. The city is under blockade."

Electricity and gas supplies were cut off in Osh since June 11 and public transportation is not functioning. The city's bazaar has been set alight, as were many other buildings downtown, Toksonbaev reports. Several residential houses were reportedly set on fire, including houses in Uzbek neighborhoods. There are extensive reports about clashes between the local Kyrgyz and the area's sizeable Uzbek minority.

RFE/RL correspondent Toksonbaev said "there are many masked men moving in the city, who appeared to be shooting both at Uzbeks and Kyrgyz." "They speak both Kyrgyz and Uzbek perfectly, so it's very confusing and difficult to determine who these men are," he said. "Soldiers and police forces move only in the city center and areas where tension is high and people call for help. But men in black masks are seen in all parts of the city. They come, shoot, and leave. Even the police and forces from the Defense Ministry are not able to hunt them down," Toksonbaev said.

The turmoil has spread to the capital Bishkek, where at least 27 people have reportedly been hospitalized since clashes overnight. Local media reported that authorities in the capital have been trying to stop groups of people -- mostly young men -- from going to Osh. Dozens of angry people reportedly gathered around the parliament building today, demanding that authorities to provide them with vehicles to go to Osh, saying they wanted to protect their relatives in the south."¹⁰¹

A report published on the 14 of June 2010 by *The Committee to Protect Journalists* states that that local television stations in the southern Kyrgyz city of Osh were ordered to cease transmission,

¹⁰¹ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *Kyrgyzstan Mobilizes Troops As Violence Spreads In Southern Cities*, 12 June 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Deathtoll_In_Kyrgyz_Violence_Rises_To_50/2069306.html, accessed 12 November 2010

"The Committee to Protect Journalists is disturbed by reports that local television stations in the southern Kyrgyz city of Osh were ordered to cease transmission on Friday by the city government in the wake of interethnic violence in the region.

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According to local press reports, on Friday, the independent Osh television channels Osh TV and Mezon TV, and the recently nationalized, Russian-language channel Piramida, stopped broadcasting on the orders of the Osh city government, which did not publicly explain why it was shutting down the stations. Since the order to stop broadcasting, Mezon TV and Osh TV have both been vandalized, []. The news Web site Vesti reported on Saturday that the regional television station in Jalal-Abad was in flames."¹⁰²

The ICRC notes in a report published on 15 June 2010 the challenges faced by refugees and IDPs following the violence in southern Kyrgyzstan,

"We've been in touch with a mosque in Osh, where a volunteer doctor told us that 6,000 ethnic Uzbeks had sought refuge from one district of the city alone. Almost half of the people in the mosque are children and they're trying to survive off of food provided by a local farmer," said Séverine Chappaz, the ICRC's deputy head of mission in Kyrgyzstan. "In addition to food, they say they need insulin, IV fluids, syringes, antibiotics, soap and wound dressings as they are dealing with many burn victims."

The ICRC has also received several reports of small health clinics in Osh and even a retirement home being over run with hundreds of people in need of medical help. Working together, the ICRC and the Red Crescent Society of Kyrgyzstan have assisted 16 medical facilities caring for more than 1,130 injured people in the past week. A lull in the shooting on Tuesday near Jalal-Abad enabled a small team of ICRC doctors to visit the city's main hospital, where they provided additional medical supplies to staff, who were treating around 60 wounded patients.

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"Things have been a little calmer in Osh over the past 24 hours, even though tensions and fear are still running high and the situation remains very volatile, especially in Jalal-Abad," said Mrs Chappaz. "We've been able to get a better idea of what's going on outside of Osh but we still don't know the full extent of the humanitarian impact of the fighting in the region. On a positive note, we welcomed the news that the Kyrgyz authorities have been able to secure an area in Osh, where they've been using helicopters to evacuate people who feel unsafe. We also know of 17 seriously wounded patients, who were able to be evacuated from Jalal-Abad to Bishkek."

The insecurity over the past six days has prevented many aid agencies from bringing staff and supplies into the area and the ICRC is working with the Kyrgyz Red Crescent and the authorities to determine the scope of the needs, what's available and what else is needed, as well as facilitate and coordinate the distribution of existing aid.

On the Uzbek side of the border, the authorities say there are now 45,000 registered adult refugees staying in at least 40 makeshift camps, as well as factories, schools and parking lots, or with relatives in Uzbekistan. Most of them are women with children, bringing the total number of estimated refugees to over 100,000, according to Uzbek officials."¹⁰³

A UNHCR report dated 17 June 2010 states that 400,000 people have been uprooted by the violence that began in the previous week in Kyrgyzstan,

¹⁰² Committee to Protect Journalists, Kyrgyz stations shut down, only state TV broadcasting, 14 June 2010, <http://cpj.org/2010/06/kyrgystani-stations-shut-down-only-state-tv-broadc.php>, accessed 12 November 2010

¹⁰³ ICRC, Kyrgyzstan/Uzbekistan: situation remains tense as concerns grow over plight of displaced and refugees, 15 June 2010, <http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/kyrgyzstan-uzbekistan-news-150610?opendocument>, accessed 2 November 2010

“Some 400,000 people have been uprooted by the violence that began in last week, the United Nations refugee agency said today, citing figures provided by governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on the ground.

Around 300,000 of those fleeing the clashes between Kyrgyz and ethnic Uzbeks in the southern part of the Central Asian nation are believed to be internally displaced within the country, while an estimated 100,000 others have sought refuge in neighbouring Uzbekistan, [

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“The situation in Osh and nearby villages appears to be volatile,” said UNHCR, adding that sporadic clashes have reportedly taken place around the town of Jalalabad and the situation there is tense. Many families have left from Osh and Jalalabad to the capital, Bishkek, and other areas, fearing further violence. While many of the 300,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) are being sheltered by family and host communities, it is also estimated that at least 40,000 people are in need of shelter.

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A *Reuters* report dated 17 June 2010 states that some of those forced from their homes by the violent events in southern Kyrgyzstan are afraid to return having suffered grave assaults,

“Clashes between southern Kyrgyzstan's main ethnic groups, Kyrgyz and Uzbeks, have killed at least 191 people since June 10. Some observers put the toll at nearer 1,000.

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The killing has subsided in the last two days, but up to 100,000 people have fled their homes and set up camps in the Ferghana valley, where Kyrgyzstan borders Uzbekistan. A barbed wire fence patrolled by Uzbek troops divides the countries. Tens of thousands who crossed into Uzbekistan before the border was closed are housed in schools and rows of tents.

On the Kyrgyz side, up to 100 people at a time are crammed into the clay houses and courtyards of ethnic Uzbeks. Many sleep rough on the arid ground. Refugees, some with weeping sores on their feet, queue for bread distributed from local stockpiles. The rules are strict: one loaf per family. Women, children and the elderly make up the majority of the refugees. Many were dressed in nightgowns.

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“If we go back there now, they will cut our throats. We need Uzbek autonomy to survive,” said Yulruz Kurbanova, 37, who fled Osh after armed gangs killed her niece and mother. Local men, who declined to be identified, said they were holding hostage several ethnic Kyrgyz captured between Osh and the border. They said they would release them in exchange for ethnic Uzbeks they believed were also being held. A *Reuters* reporter at the border did not see any hostages and could not independently verify these statements.

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Kurbanova said about 50 armed men broke into her house in Osh on June 12. She showed a *Reuters* reporter photographs of her dead niece and mother, taken earlier on her mobile phone. Her sister, 49-year-old Erkinai Umarova, bore wounds in her ear lobes. She said the attackers had ripped out her earrings. The two sisters only escaped, Umarova said, because the attackers mistook them for ethnic Tatars after stripping them naked. “They said: ‘Look at their white bodies! They can’t be Uzbeks’ and let us go.”

¹⁰⁴ UNHCR, Number of civilians uprooted by Kyrgyz crisis on the rise, 17 June 2010, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=35053&Cr=kyrgyz&Cr1=&Kw1=Kyrgyzstan+&Kw2=&Kw3=>, accessed 12 November 2010

A third sister, Nigora Tulanova, wept. It was her five-year-old daughter - Kurbanova's niece - whom a sniper had shot dead. "I don't know how I can go on living," she said. Mavlyuda Abdрахmanova, 43, fled as her house burnt down. "We no longer have any trust left for the Kyrgyz," she said."¹⁰⁵

The Guardian reports on 17 June 2010 the grave violence occurring in Jalalabad,

"Eyewitnesses said the riots in Jalal-Abad were similar to those in Osh – with armoured personnel carriers used to kill defenceless civilians and clear the way for a knife- and stick-wielding mob. Kyrgyz men in military fatigues rounded up Uzbek youths in the main square and executed them, some claimed. The Guardian was unable to establish the veracity of such claims.

"What happened in both cities was a genocide, a holocaust," Alisher Karimov, a local Uzbek journalist, said. "It was very well organised." The riots began in Jalal-Abad on Sunday, Karimov said, when around 3,000 Kyrgyz youths gathered in the hippodrome on the edge of town. They were handed automatic weapons and then set off for the centre – ransacking and burning Uzbek houses on both sides of Lenin Street, trashing the town's Uzbek university financed by an Uzbek oligarch and razing Uzbek shops and cafes. Daubed on the walls was the slogan: "Death to Uzbeks."

"They burned down all the homes of non-Kyrgyz. We had two to three days of chaos here," Karimov said. "My neighbour was shot dead. What was shown on Kyrgyz TV didn't resemble the truth. They said the situation was under control. It wasn't under control," Karimov said – adding that he had been robbed at gunpoint. "They took my mobile phone and wallet.

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For the Kyrgyz population life was almost back to normal today, with the bazaar open again, flatbreads for sale on colourful tables and one ambitious cafe even serving plates of fried eggs and sausage."¹⁰⁶

EurasiaNet notes in a report dated 17 June 2010 certain atrocities committed in the south of Kyrgyzstan between June 12th and June 14th 2010,

"Friday, June 12 – In the village of Naramon

In the village of Naramon, not far from Osh airport, sniper fire rang out in the early morning. Several were killed and dozens wounded. At Naramon's clinic, staffers rushed back and forth to treat the wounded. Short on supplies, they used anything at hand to stop the bleeding of victims. Many injured Uzbeks said they had tried to seek treatment at medical facilities in Osh, only to be purportedly turned away by ethnic Kyrgyz medical staff. One car brought a 14-year-old boy to Naramon shot in the head as he tried to escort his sister to a border crossing. As the doctor lifted his limp body from the bed of the truck, it was clear there was nothing doctors could do. He was pronounced dead.

At the VLKSM border crossing, a sea of women and children dressed in traditional Uzbek colors gathered near a small land bridge, hoping to cross into Uzbekistan. They tried to surge across a trench dug by Uzbek border authorities. Everywhere mounds of belongings, mostly clothes and blankets, were strewn across the area.

Monday June 13 -- Surveying the damage in Osh

In the center of Osh, ethnic Uzbeks searched for the charred remains of those killed during the fighting. The smell of burnt flesh filled the air. Hundreds of homes in the neighborhood

¹⁰⁵ Reuters, Witness - Refugees of Kyrgyz violence afraid to return home, 17 June 2010, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKTRE65G2LI20100617>, accessed 2 November 2010

¹⁰⁶ The Guardian, Uzbek refugees from Kyrgyzstan pogrom vow to return, 17 June 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jun/17/kyrgyzstan-uzbek-pogrom-refugees>, accessed 12 November 2010

were gutted by fire. Many died in their homes. Dozens of individuals, including women and children, were killed by sniper fire from a minaret on Alisher Novoi Street in downtown Osh.

Near the Sara Tosh border crossing, at a makeshift field hospital, I was speaking to medical workers when two cars frantically pulled up. Inside was a 13-year-old girl who had been gang raped. Standing there, grown men began to weep. The victim's brother with tears in his eyes asked for help.

At another makeshift medical facility, a converted mosque, hundreds of displaced Uzbeks stood outside in the intense sun. With little water and no food, many suffered from heat exhaustion. As I approached the facility, a car rushed up carrying an injured, elderly Uzbek man. He had been severely beaten and tortured, and his toes were cut off.

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Upon leaving, one elderly Uzbek IDP named Hamid approached me, and, fighting back tears, said: "They came into our homes, our mosques, raped, burned, and killed our women and children. For as long as we live, we will never forget this."

Tuesday, June 14 - In Jalal-abad with security forces

The main road into Jalal-abad city was littered with burned-out cars. Friendship University, founded by a prominent Uzbek entrepreneur, had been burned. Only a shell of the building existed. Businesses with 'Kyrgyz' spray-painted on them were untouched. Uzbek homes and business were totally destroyed. Slogans calling on Uzbeks to leave, calling them dogs, were spray painted throughout the city. The city was a virtual ghost town as the 6pm curfew approached.

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Patrolling with the military at night, troops took cover behind destroyed buildings and burned cars, communicating back and forth with flashlights. Anyone caught outside was subjected to a document check, soldiers nervously checking papers with their fingers on the triggers of their weapons. Gunshots could be heard throughout the night, and tension remained in the air."¹⁰⁷

A BBC report dated 21 June 2010 notes further outbreaks of violence in southern Kyrgyzstan,

"At least one person has been killed in Kyrgyzstan as security forces clashed with ethnic Uzbeks near the troubled southern city of Osh, officials say. A man was shot dead in Nariman as the authorities attempted to flush out "militants" behind the recent violence between Kyrgyz and Uzbek people. Human rights activists said the troops had killed two people and injured 20.

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Human rights workers say the latest incident occurred when government forces went on patrol in the Uzbek neighbourhood of Nariman.

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Other activists allege the attack was in retaliation for the recent killing of a local police chief.

However, the Kyrgyz interim government said its soldiers had come under attack and a man was killed in an exchange of gunfire. "The acts of the officer were justified," it said in a statement, adding that claims 20 people were injured did not "correspond to reality".¹⁰⁸

An article published on 21 June 2010 by *The New York Times* details ongoing violent events in the city of Osh in southern Kyrgyzstan,

¹⁰⁷ EurasiaNet, Witnessing Atrocities in Southern Kyrgyzstan, 17 June 2010, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61334>, accessed 12 November 2010

¹⁰⁸ BBC News, New clashes near southern Kyrgyz city of Osh, 21 June 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10366032>, accessed 2 November 2010

“A military sweep ended in bloodshed on Monday in an area of the southern Kyrgyz city of Osh where residents’ protective barricades had been removed by force, with two residents dead and about two dozen hospitalized with injuries from beatings.

Over the weekend, Kyrgyz troops removed the barricades, which residents had built during four days of ethnic violence that started June 10. At dawn on Monday, security forces began a house-to-house sweep of the area, the Uzbek village of Nariman, demanding information about a Kyrgyz police official who was killed there this month.

On Saturday, the government ordered its forces to remove the barricades that the remaining Uzbeks had built around themselves, saying it would not allow “zones where the government does not have power,” as the mayor of Osh put it. Residents of some enclaves, like Nariman, refused to remove the roadblocks.”¹⁰⁹

A report by the *UN News Centre* dated 24 June 2010 states that ethnic tensions and fear of further violence remain in southern Kyrgyzstan,

“Ethnic tensions and rumours of impending violence persist in Kyrgyzstan, and refugees and displaced persons who have started to return home after the deadly clashes earlier this month must be given a guarantee of safety, a senior United Nations official told the Security Council today.

Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Oscar Fernandez-Taranco gave a closed-door briefing to Council members in which he said it was vital to avoid provocations that might re-ignite the violence between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks that erupted in the cities of Osh and Jalalabad and other towns. Mr. Fernandez-Taranco said that while the situation in Osh and Jalalabad had reportedly calmed, ethnic tensions persisted and there were also rumours of impending violence between the communities. Aid deliveries by humanitarian agencies are also being disrupted by security concerns.

At least 300,000 people became internally displaced following the violence, while nearly 100,000 others fled into neighbouring Uzbekistan. The Kyrgyz health ministry recorded a death toll of almost 200 but some senior officials in the country’s interim Government said the number of casualties could be much higher.

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Meanwhile, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that while public transport is working in Osh and both ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks are seen in the streets, some districts remain closed.

About 50,000 refugees returned from Uzbekistan yesterday, according to the Kyrgyz border service, while more than 300,000 IDPs are scattered around in schools, kindergartens, with host families or out in the open. The World Food Programme (WFP) is stepping up its efforts to bring food to residents of Osh who have barricaded themselves in their homes because of fears of renewed violence.

Amir Abdulla, the chief operating officer and deputy executive director of WFP, met with local women as they received a two-week ration of flour and oil from the agency. “These women have suffered such a trauma over the last few days and have had to confront real hunger,” he said.”¹¹⁰

Médecins Sans Frontières reports in a 29 June briefing the impact of ethnic violence on civilians in southern Kyrgyzstan from 10 June 2010,

¹⁰⁹ The New York Times, New Violence Reported in Kyrgyzstan, 21 June 2010,

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/22/world/asia/22kyrgyz.html?ref=kyrgyzstan>, accessed 12 November 2010

¹¹⁰ UN News Centre, UN official warns Security Council that ethnic tensions remain high in Kyrgyzstan, 24 June 2010,

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=35136&Cr=kyrgyz&Cr1=&Kw1=Kyrgyzstan+&Kw2=&Kw3=>, accessed 12 November 2010

“The situation is still very tense in Osh and Jalal-Abad, southern Kyrgyzstan, where violent clashes killed hundreds since June 10th.

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The situation is still very tense in Osh and Jalal-Abad, southern Kyrgyzstan, where violent clashes killed hundreds since June 10th. “The patients were all men suffering from wounds such as head injuries, ribs fractures, and bruises,” said Andrei Slavuckij, MSF coordinator in Southern Kyrgyzstan. “These wounds were clearly related to violent beatings. This is just a new example that violence and tensions are far from over here.”

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MSF witnessed the presence of four unidentified armed persons in the premises of the hospital, a situation which may prevent other wounded people to seek medical care. “If other people are wounded, they may be hiding somewhere and be too scared to come and get medical care at the hospital,” added Slavuckij. “In addition, some ambulances cannot refer severe patients to more specialised medical structures because their drivers have received death threats in some places at checkpoints for doing so. It is essential that patients who need care have total, unhindered access to medical structures.”

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More than ten days after inter-community clashes erupted in southern Kyrgyzstan, the situation is still very tense in and around the cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad. Although MSF has observed that some of the people who fled violence (some by crossing the border to Uzbekistan) have now started to return to their places of origin. A lot of houses are burned in Osh and its surroundings, and many people are still very scared, hiding or barricaded in their neighbourhoods. Many rumours only aggravate this situation of fear.”¹¹¹

IRIN News reports in a 21 July 2010 article that security forces in southern Kyrgyzstan have begun taking measures to prevent further unrest,

“As a 40-day mourning period comes to an end on 20-21 July, security forces have begun taking measures to prevent further unrest, following clashes between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in southern Kyrgyzstan in June.

Roadblocks on roads in and out of Osh city, where mobs began violent rampages against minority ethnic Uzbeks on 10 June, have been set up to prevent any “troublemakers” entering, Kyrgyz officials said.”¹¹²

The *IDMC* notes in a 20 July 2010 report the return of some IDPs and refugees in southern Kyrgyzstan,

“Following widespread violence and destruction in southern Kyrgyzstan in June, about 75,000 people remain displaced within the country. They continue to face serious protection concerns, as do some 300,000 refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) who have returned to their communities in Osh and Jalal-Abad oblasts.

Although the situation has calmed since a constitutional referendum and the formation of a new government in early July, insecurity remains serious as 37,500 people are unable to return to their homes due to fear or intimidation. Several organizations have reported on security forces’ human rights violations, namely arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment, specifically of young ethnic Uzbek men.

¹¹¹ Médecins Sans Frontières, MSF increases its medical and humanitarian support in southern Kyrgyzstan, 29 June 2010, http://www.msf.org/msfinternational/invoke.cfm?component=article&objectid=82CBF24E-15C5-F00A-259C4055FCB9E013&method=full_html, accessed 2 November 2010

¹¹² IRIN News, Kyrgyzstan: Not yet out of the woods, 21 July 2010, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportID=89906>, accessed 2 November 2010

Kyrgyz citizens' freedom of movement is limited as the Kyrgyz side of the border with Uzbekistan has been closed since mid-July. IDPs are mostly living with host families, though others are living in collective centres or tents, often on the grounds of their former homes.

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The loss of personal documents while fleeing or as a result of the destruction is widespread. People therefore struggle to access health care services, pensions and disability payments, while finding it difficult to prove ownership of housing and land. Obstacles to accessing health care services also include fear of detention and discrimination and military presence at medical facilities. Assessments have confirmed a high prevalence of mental trauma caused by widespread violence, rape, arson and displacement, estimating over 100,000 people to be in need of psychological support. Some 300,000 people are also in need of food assistance."¹¹³

A *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* report dated 15 September 2010 notes that a rally took place in the southern Kyrgyz town of Uzgen,

"Officials in the southern Kyrgyz city of Uzgen say a crowd of several hundred people rallied today to demand the release of a local man detained on suspicion of illegal arms possession, [].

Local police chief Bakyt Matmusaev told RFE/RL that security forces had detained the man after acting on information he had weapons in his home.

District head Alisher Bakyshev told RFE/RL that around 300 people had gathered, though Matmusaev put the number closer to 2,000. Bakyshev said a crowd initially gathered during the raid in a mainly Uzbek neighborhood, with some shouting that security forces had come to attack them. He said police fired shots in the air to disperse them.

Bakyshev said people then gathered at the local police building to demand the man's release. He said the crowd was mainly made up of ethnic Uzbeks, and that the demonstrators later dispersed."¹¹⁴

A *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* report of 23 September 2010 notes the conviction of four men involved in the inter-ethnic violence that flared in southern Kyrgyzstan in June,

"A court in southern Kyrgyzstan has sentenced four men to four years in jail for using local mosques to set off deadly unrest in June, [].

The Kara-Suu district court in southern Osh Oblast convicted the four residents of the villages of Shark and Nariman today of "organizing mass disorder" in the region on June 10.

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The court found that the four men intoned the Azan - the traditional Islamic call for prayer in Arabic - at a time when prayers were not due. Local Uzbeks construed the unscheduled Azan as an alarm and started gathering en masse at local mosques, which prompted an escalation of interethnic tension, Jobonov said. Investigators found that deadly ethnic clashes between local Uzbeks and Kyrgyz on June 10 started with those sudden appeals for people to come to the mosques. According to witnesses, the calls were made around midnight, which is a very unusual time for the call to prayer. According to investigators, the calls from minarets were the signal to Uzbeks to attack local Kyrgyz."¹¹⁵

A *New York Times* article published on 9 October 2010 refers to the investigation of crimes committed in the June 2010 violence by state authorities,

¹¹³ IDMC, Kyrgyzstan: Most IDPs and refugees return, but numerous protection concerns persist, [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004D31AA/\(httpIDPNewsAlerts\)/EE65783DD239E193C125777000551700?OpenDocument](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004D31AA/(httpIDPNewsAlerts)/EE65783DD239E193C125777000551700?OpenDocument), accessed 12 November 2010

¹¹⁴ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Detention Sparks Protest Rally In Southern Kyrgyz City, 15 September 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Detention_Sparks_Protest_Rally_In_Southern_Kyrgyz_City/2158890.html, accessed 12 November 2010

¹¹⁵ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Four Men Jailed For Using Mosques To Spark Kyrgyz Unrest, 23 September 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Four_Men_Jailed_For_Using_Mosques_To_Spark_Kyrgyz_Unrest/2166152.html, accessed 12 November 2010

“As local authorities continue to investigate the fearsome outbreak of ethnic violence that gripped this provincial city four months ago, the experience of Zukhra Khakimova stands out as typical.

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For Ms. Khakimova, her case seemed open and shut. A neighbor said a military armored vehicle was parked in the street while the house burned. Ms. Khakimova provided the police with pictures of the bones she had found in the cellar, along with some personal effects, like scraps of clothing.

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Yet an investigator who took her case focused first on another crime — the theft of two cars from the yard that night, a Daewoo Tico and an Opel Astra, Ms. Khakimova said. The city police investigator, Col. Madraim Gapirov, said the car thefts would be handled before the homicide, Ms. Khakimova said in an interview in the ruins of her former home, a tea pot protruding from a pile of bricks.

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Reached by telephone, Colonel Gapirov denied that he had given priority to the car thefts; he said he had indicated that they might be solved sooner only because his office was swamped with homicide cases. The handling of the investigation into the unrest, led by local authorities, has seemed to only deepen the hatred between the two groups in this remote and poor Central Asian nation, [].

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Another problem, Mr. Solvang said, is that the police in Osh and elsewhere are using the arrests of Uzbeks to seek bribes. “Only people from poor families remain in jail,” he said. Uzbeks also face a terrifying journey through the Kyrgyz-dominated justice system, as judges have allowed rowdy crowds of ethnic Kyrgyz men into the courtrooms to taunt defendants and intimidate their lawyers. On the courthouse steps at a hearing on Thursday, a Kyrgyz man kicked a foreign reporter in the shin, upset that he was talking to relatives of the accused.”¹¹⁶

A report by *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* on 6 October 2010 announces the Kyrgyz Prosecutor General's Office official statement of the death toll of the June violence,

“The death toll from the June clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in Kyrgyzstan's southern regions of Osh and Jalal-Abad has risen to 429, [].

The Kyrgyz Prosecutor General's Office announced on October 6 that more than 2,500 people were injured in the violence, of whom 1,615 suffered gunshot wounds. The majority of those killed were men between the age of 20 and 30.

Seventy-two still unidentified bodies remain in morgues in Osh and Jalal-Abad. Some 201 DNA samples are currently being tested at a forensic center in Moscow.”¹¹⁷

A *Human Rights Watch* report dated 9 November 2010 highlights the threats defendants have faced while on trial, charged with the murder of police officer in the June violence,

“In September, the defendants were convicted of killing a police officer from Bazar-Kurgan on June 13, 2010. Their trial has been marred by threats and violence against them and their lawyer. The most recent attack was on November 4, after an appeal hearing. After the hearing, most of the defendants were transferred to the Bazar-Kurgan district police station, where the police officer worked.

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Two people who observed the hearing on November 4, but were told to leave the court before the defendants, told Human Rights Watch that when the eight defendants were led

¹¹⁶ The New York Times, *Kyrgyz Tensions Simmer Amid Inquiry Into Unrest*, 9 October 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/10/world/asia/10kyrgyz.html?_r=1&ref=kyrgyzstan, accessed 18 November 2010

¹¹⁷ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *Death toll from violence in Kyrgyzstan rises*, 6 October 2010, available from, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4cb83e8c28.html>, accessed 18 November 2010

out of the court, some of them were holding their heads, as if in pain, and one had blood on his face, indicating that they might have been beaten after the hearing and before they left the courthouse.

As police officers led the defendants to a vehicle, the people standing outside said the officers kicked and hit at least one of the defendants in the back. The police then transported the defendants to the Bazar-Kurgan district police station. Lawyers for the defendants immediately informed the Bazar-Kurgan prosecutor's office of the suspected assault and asked the prosecutor's office to arrange for medical examinations of the defendants when they arrived at the station. It is unclear whether medical examinations took place.

Relatives of the murdered police officer also threatened to kill at least one of the lawyers during a break in the appeal proceedings, people who witnessed the episode said. A judge later ordered one of the relatives to leave the courtroom because of interruptions, but she refused and was allowed to remain until the end of the hearing.”¹¹⁸

An *IWPR* report of 8 November 2010 states that the Kyrgyzstan authorities appear to have been uncertain whether to crack down on people who seize land for their own use on 7 November in southern Kyrgyzstan,

“The authorities in Kyrgyzstan appear to be uncertain whether to crack down on people who seize land for their own use, or encourage them to believe their demands will be met. The most recent incident involved a group of people who took over private farmland near the southern city of Osh on November 7. Between 500 and 1,000 people moved onto the land in Kara-Suu and announced they wanted to build homes there.

The would-be squatters were eventually dispersed by police, but they did win a significant concession – Sooronbay Jeenbekov, the regional governor of Osh, agreed to set up a commission that will draw up a list of individuals in need of land, and review the options for giving them new plots.

The case raised particular concern because some of the farmland that was temporarily taken over belonged to or was rented by ethnic Uzbeks, whereas the settlers were Kyrgyz.

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Elmira Nogoybaeva, head of the Polis Asia think-tank in Bishkek, said such land seizures, if unchecked, could intensify ethnic divisions. “I’m still inclined to believe this has more to do with the weakness of the hierarchy of government than it does with the ethnic issue. In this particular land-grab case, the issue wasn’t as acute as some of the media have reported,” she said. “But of course there’s a lot of ethnically-based manipulation going on in the south, so a conflict of this kind taking place there could shift from an economic to an ethnic plane.”

Nogoybaeva said governor Jeenbekov’s offer to provide alternative pieces of land was a “temporary, compromise fix” that set a bad precedent and risked creating more problems.”¹¹⁹

The *IWPR* reports on 29 November 2010 that the Kyrgyzstan authorities have placed the security services on alert after renewed clashes in Osh,

“Security officials in Kyrgyzstan have appealed for calm after a firefight with suspected militants in the southern city of Osh, insisting the authorities are in control and there will be no repetition of the mass violence seen in June.

The interior ministry said four armed men were killed on November 29 when they put up resistance to a raid by security forces targeting a group of “national separatists”. Three

¹¹⁸ HRW, Kyrgyzstan: New Assault in Violence-Ridden Court Case, 9 November 2010, <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/11/09/kyrgyzstan-new-assault-violence-ridden-court-case>, accessed 12 November 2010

¹¹⁹ IWPR, Kyrgyz Authorities Struggle to Curb Land Grabs, 24 November 2010, <http://iwpr.net/sr/node/49355>, accessed 12 November 2010

appear to have been shot and the fifth killed himself by detonating explosives. Four members of the security services were injured.

The clash took place next to the central bus station in Osh, and five minutes' walk from the main market, one of the city's most crowded locations. This part of Osh is mainly home to ethnic Uzbeks. A statement from the National Security Service appealed to people not to be led astray by rumours that Osh was about to undergo a renewed wave of ethnic violence.

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The security service statement said the police were in full control in Osh, patrolling the streets and setting up checkpoints at entry points to the city. It said at least one of the men had been positively linked to a plan to stage terror attacks in Osh and the Kyrgyz capital, which was foiled by a police operation carried out on November 22. That raid resulted in several arrests and the seizure of home-made explosives and remote control detonating devices.

In Osh, the sound of gunfire sparked panic among locals who feared the June bloodshed was about to start all over again. The mood of fear has since subsided, eyewitnesses say.”¹²⁰

3. Role of Government Forces and External Actors in Recent Turmoil

A report by the *UN News Centre* in July 2010 states that the High Commissioner for Human Rights, believes Kyrgyz security forces were involved in breaches of human rights during the ethnic strife in southern Kyrgyzstan,

“Security forces in southern are responsible for human rights violations, ranging from arbitrary detention to torture, threatening the fragile peace in the area six weeks after it was rocked by deadly inter-ethnic violence, a top United Nations official said today.

“Large numbers of people – most of them young men, and virtually all of them Uzbek – have been arbitrarily detained in ways that not only demonstrate flagrant ethnic bias, but also break many of the fundamental tenets of both Kyrgyz and international law,” High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay stressed.

Her staff in Kyrgyzstan, she said, have received information suggesting that local authorities are “routinely turning a blind eye” to illegal arrests, torture and ill-treatment of detainees which result in forced confessions. Further, the lawyers and families of victims, as well as human rights defenders, are also being threatened and intimidated, Ms. Pillay noted.

“All of these acts are clearly illegal under the Kyrgyz penal code as well as under international law,” she stated. More than 1,000 people have been detained on the cities of Osh and Jalalabad since last month's violence between Kyrgyz and ethnic Uzbeks, which uprooted some 400,000 people.”¹²¹

A report by *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* in May 2010 highlights concerns regarding the police's inability to protect citizens during the upheaval,

“Less than two months ago, Daniyar Terbeshaliev was a private entrepreneur running a small business not far from downtown Bishkek. [] Terbeshaliev now heads Patriot, a civilian patrol group that guards government buildings, businesses, and residential neighborhoods to ensure security amid the chaos that has reigned in Kyrgyzstan since early April.

¹²⁰ IWPR, Kyrgyzstan on Alert After Osh Clash, 29 November 2010, <http://iwpr.net/report-news/kyrgyzstan-alert-after-osh-clash>, accessed 12 November 2010

¹²¹ UN News Centre, Kyrgyz security forces committing human rights violations, 20 July 2010, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=35365&Cr=kyrgyz&Cr1=&Kw1=Kyrgyzstan+&Kw2=&Kw3=>, accessed 2 November 2010

Patriot was initially set up by ordinary Bishkek residents the night after riots broke out in the capital on April 7, chasing President Kurmanbek Bakiev from office and leaving some 85 people dead. Disappointed by what they call the police's inability to protect citizens during the upheaval, locals organized their own neighborhood forces to defend themselves and their property. But now, their goals have expanded considerably.

"Initially, our goal was to protect our own houses," says Terbeshaliev. "Now we are patrolling the area around the parliament and central government buildings; the Bishkek mayor's office; several banks and shopping centers; all major bazaars; and the main bus stations, among other places." Other cities followed suit, and now there are thousands of civilian patrol members all over the country that have taken charge of security in their neighborhoods, working alongside police.

In a country where the security situation is still fragile and the new government's authority is being challenged by supporters of the previous regime, many ordinary Kyrgyz say the civilian patrols play an important role in maintaining order.

Civilian patrols operate in many different areas, from Tokmok and Kant in the north to Jalal-Abad and Osh in the south. "People trust civilian patrols, while the police don't enjoy such trust," says Janarbek Akaev, an RFE/RL correspondent in the southern city of Osh. "Their presence is important for people to feel safe. They don't let anyone take advantage of current circumstances to loot people's homes, to attack or disturb others.

"During last week's protests in the region, police forces just stood there and watched," Akaev says. Perceived police indifference to public security during the protests may have been the last straw for citizens, many of whom have expressed frustration at years of corruption and bribery by the police. Many accuse the police of serving political leaders' interests instead of protecting citizens.

The interim government has promised to reform the police structure and fight corruption within the system. According to the interim chief of staff, Emil Kaptagaev, the interim government does not finance civilian patrols but supports them and acknowledges their importance.

Civilian patrols say they are financed by ordinary people and private businessmen. Terbeshaliev maintains they are not involved in politics and do not take sides during political struggles. Not everyone in Kyrgyzstan is happy with having unofficial forces being in charge of security, however. Dinara Oshurahunova, a human rights activist in Bishkek, says some complain that "criminal elements" have joined the civilian patrols and that people are suspicious about their agendas. Others question how long thousands of patrol members - most of them young men in their 20s - can be expected to continue volunteering their time."¹²²

A July 2010 report by the *Jamestown Foundation* notes the lack of police training in southern Kyrgyzstan,

"Underfinanced, underequipped and poorly trained Kyrgyz military and police forces lack experience in dealing with ethnic conflict. As the violence erupted in Osh on June 10, the security forces acted chaotically, short of credible information and clear political leadership. A credible investigation should show how Kyrgyz security structures behaved during the bloodshed and prove that acts of violence were conducted as a result of ethnic hatred and not organizational flaws. Meanwhile, by presenting an incomplete picture, international human rights activists risk distorting an already complicated situation in Kyrgyzstan.

¹²² Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Kyrgyz Civilian Patrols Expand Security Role, 17 May 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Kyrgyz_Civilian_Patrols_Expand_Security_Role/2044778.html, accessed 2 November 2010

Subjected to international criticism, Kyrgyz police and power institutions are growing increasingly opposed to the idea of any type of investigation into the violence, instead preferring to silence those that might challenge their status, including local NGO activists and foreign journalists. Frustrated about status and reputation, the police in particular seem desperate to conceal their own crimes.”¹²³

The New York Times reports in a June 2010 article that the Kyrgyz army was responsible for acts of brutality in southern Kyrgyzstan during the ethnic unrest,

“As the armored personnel carrier rumbled down the street, men in Kyrgyz military uniforms clinging to its sides, residents of an ethnic Uzbek neighborhood here felt a surge of relief. The peacekeepers, it seemed, had finally arrived.

But then the men in uniforms jumped down and began firing automatic weapons into homes while shouting anti-Uzbek slurs, more than a dozen residents of the neighborhood, Shai-Tubeh, said in interviews on Wednesday. They spoke of the terrifying moments last week when they realized that they were under attack from what appeared to be their own nation’s military. They said the assailants killed several people, wounded many others and set fire to buildings.

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The accounts from the people of Shai-Tubeh and numerous other reports by witnesses lend powerful credence to suspicions of organized violence, pointing to rogue elements of the Kyrgyz government and military. The involvement of even a faction of the military could be a sign that the interim Kyrgyz government is not in complete control. Shai-Tubeh does not seem to be an isolated case. On Wednesday, at a mosque near the border with Uzbekistan that is now sheltering ethnic Uzbek refugees, several people from other areas of Osh described similar scenes of neighborhoods and houses being assaulted by men in uniform using Kyrgyz military vehicles, arms and matériel.

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A doctor at the shelter, Halisa Abdurazakova, 37, said that residents of her neighborhood had blocked the main road with large boulders and other objects after the violence started. But a Kyrgyz Army tank soon arrived, she said, and pushed aside the debris, allowing gunmen in an armored personnel carrier to drive through and start shooting.

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While blaming Mr. Bakiyev for the hostilities, the interim government has also dismissed questions about whether the military took part. “These are just rumors,” said Omurbek Suvanaliyev, the Osh region’s police chief. “This is part of a large-scale disinformation campaign.”¹²⁴

A report by the *ICRC* published in June 2010 states that some who fled the violence in southern Kyrgyzstan are mistrustful of the security forces,

“Although thousands of people have started to return home, people still fear for their safety. There have also been allegations of fresh violence. The security forces attempting to restore law and order are viewed with apprehension and suspicion, and the communities are mistrustful of each other. In addition, there has been widespread destruction of private property, and many people have no homes to return to. The behaviour of the security forces in the coming days and weeks will be a key factor in restoring a climate of trust, and we urge them to exercise their functions with all due consideration for the affected communities. The authorities, too, in order to prevent a resurgence of violence, will have to demonstrate

¹²³ Jamestown Foundation, *Alarmist International Reporting Alienates Armed Forces and Challenges Stability in Kyrgyzstan* - The Jamestown Foundation, 22 July 2010, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=36652](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=36652), accessed 12 November 2010

¹²⁴ *The New York Times*, *Army’s Hand Suspected in Kyrgyzstan*, 16 June 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/17/world/asia/17kyrgyz.html?ref=kyrgyzstan>, accessed 12 November 2010

commitment to the fight against impunity for those who have perpetrated crimes in connection with the recent turmoil.”¹²⁵

FIDH notes in a July 2010 report on the inter-ethnic violence that government forces have been accused of participating in attacks on ethnic Uzbeks,

“FIDH member organisation Citizens Against Corruption received information about Uzbeks being arrested in Osh and being unjustly accused for fomenting the unstable situation that occurred in June 2010. On 29 June 2010, the security forces arrested Zulkhumor Moydinova requesting her to turn over her minor son, threatening that otherwise they would put weapons and drugs in her home and then lay charges against her for that.

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In the night of 24-25 June a group of five armed men committed grave violence against members of the Abdulaev family that had returned on that very day to their home village, Asancheck, where most of the population is Kirghiz. [] Since the police station is closed at night, the victims could not appeal for help during the attack. Afterwards, the victims did not want to lodge complaints at the police station or at the office of the public prosecutor (procuratura) since they did not trust the Kirghiz officers.

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Human rights defenders and anyone trying to cast light on the recent acts of violence are intimidated by the police and various other groups. On 28 June, for instance, Tolekan Ismailova, president of the NGO Citizens Against Corruption, and Aziza Abdirasulova, president of Kylum Shamy, FIDH member leagues, were summoned for interrogation at the Osh oblast Prosecutor’s Office as witnesses in a case of “organising massive disturbance” (art. 233 of the Kyrgyz Criminal Code) and “murder” (art. 97).

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FIDH points out that Azimjan Askarov, a recognised human rights defender and president of the association called *Vozdukh*, was arrested on 15 June for allegedly having participated in the confrontation that led to the death of a police officer in Bazar-Korgon. According to his lawyer, he made a film of the event and some parts seriously compromise the local police which aggressively searched Mr. Askarov’s home three times and caused major damage. Mr. Askarov is still being held at the police station in Bazar-Korgon, where, apparently, he has been tortured.”¹²⁶

In a June 2010 article published by *Amnesty International* it is stated that the ethnic Uzbeks do not trust Kyrgyz security forces,

“Despite government claims to the contrary, the security situation in southern Kyrgyzstan remains volatile and unstable. The Uzbek population does not trust the security forces of Kyrgyzstan who have proved unable to protect them and have been accused of collusion in killings and lootings.

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Reportedly, officials from Kyrgyzstan have visited people in refugee camps in Uzbekistan urging them to return. One of the refugees in the Pakhtaabad district informed Amnesty International that the governor of Jalal-Abad Region visited the camp and told the refugees that everyone had to leave by 25 June.

"People fled their homes because they feared for their lives. They fled shootings, arson attacks and destruction. It is premature of the Kyrgyzstani authorities to encourage refugees to return before they can ensure their safety," said Andrea Huber. "The Kyrgyzstani interim government appears to be encouraging refugees to return in order to proceed with its planned referendum on the constitution and on the interim President on Sunday. The

¹²⁵ ICRC, Kyrgyzstan - Uzbekistan: tensions persist as people start to return home, 23 June 2010, <http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/kyrgyzstan-interview-230610?opendocument>, accessed 12 November 2010

¹²⁶ FIDH, Kyrgyzstan: Preliminary conclusions of the FIDH fact-finding mission, 9 July 2010, <http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/kg0907a.pdf>, accessed 2 November 2010

authorities should not put the lives of thousands at risk for the sake of political convenience."¹²⁷

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reports in a June 2010 article that an investigation has been launched by the authorities into allegations of violence committed by government forces,

“The Kyrgyz authorities have launched an investigation into reported cases of beatings and robberies of Osh residents by security forces, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Osh Oblast Deputy Commandant Zamirbek Moldoshev told RFE/RL that during the disarming of some ethnic Uzbek groups in Osh and while removing street barricades some security troops behaved rudely, beat people, and robbed them of valuables in some cases. He said the Osh Prosecutor's Office has launched an investigation into the cases.

Kyrgyz security forces and police conducted operations in several Osh districts on June 22 and June 21 after several days of violent clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz. Two people died in one of the raids on June 21. Local citizens -- mainly ethnic Uzbeks -- have complained that they were beaten and robbed by Kyrgyz police and security troops during the operations."¹²⁸

Human Rights Watch states in a September 2010 report that ethnic Uzbeks have been tortured by Kyrgyz law enforcement officials,

“When the violence erupted in Osh on June 10, almost 100,000 ethnic Uzbeks fled across the officially closed border into Uzbekistan, and 300,000 others escaped to other parts of Kyrgyzstan.

But after 14 days, Uzbekistan - hardly known for championing human rights - and Kyrgyz officials used fearmongering tactics to induce the refugees to return home. They warned that if the refugees didn't vote in a June 27 constitutional referendum, they would be regarded as saboteurs of peace. They also said that people not returning right away could lose their homes and citizenship, and might never be allowed to return. Despite fears for their safety, almost all crossed back into Kyrgyzstan.

But their fears turned out to be well founded. In the weeks after the refugees returned to their destroyed neighborhoods, hundreds of ethnic Uzbek families in Osh faced arbitrary arrests, detention, beatings, and torture by Kyrgyz law enforcement and security agencies. The authorities claim the arrests are simply part of the investigation into the June violence. But dozens of ethnic Uzbeks-some still incapacitated and in pain from serious injuries sustained in detention-told me about police and military violence, including torture.

Torture and arbitrary detention, sadly, are longstanding problems in Kyrgyzstan, but the massive targeting of ethnic Uzbeks for unlawful arrest and mistreatment amid ethnic insults and threats of renewed violence is new. And it is instilling profound fear among the already traumatized ethnic Uzbeks.

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Despite potential extortion by corrupt law enforcement officials in the Osh airport or at checkpoints on the road north to the capital, those who can afford to leave are the lucky ones."¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Amnesty International, Uzbekistan must halt forcible return of refugees to Kyrgyzstan, 23 June 2010, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/uzbekistan-must-halt-forcible-return-refugees-kyrgyzstan-2010-06-24> , accessed 2 November 2010

¹²⁸ Radio Free Europe, Kyrgyz officials investigate security forces “illegal behaviour”, 22 June 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Kyrgyz_Officials_Investigate_Security_Forces_Illegal_Behavior_/2079266.html, accessed 12 November 2010

¹²⁹ HRW, Kyrgyzstan: Locked in a Tinderbox, 2 September 2010, <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/09/02/locked-tinderbox>, accessed 2 November 2010

An article published in June 2010 by *The New York Times* details further allegations of the security forces' involvement in inter-ethnic violence in southern Kyrgyzstan,

"The victims, mostly minority Uzbeks, say they were attacked by the Kyrgyz military and the police, and their accounts have been backed up by independent observers. Yet the loose coalition of political figures who took power here in April after a popular uprising is so weak, these experts and former officials say, that it could be toppled if it acknowledges that it lacks control over the police and the army.

The government has offered a variety of explanations blaming groups and people from outside the country — particularly the former president, Kurmanbek S. Bakiyev, who is in exile in Belarus — and has denied that its soldiers were involved.

"It is very useful for them to say it was caused by people outside of Kyrgyzstan," Mars Sariyev, a political analyst with the Institute of Social Policy, a think tank in Bishkek, the capital, said in an interview. It is far more convenient than admitting the reality, he said, which is that "when the interethnic violence began, the police and army took part on the side of the Kyrgyz."

In the meantime, continued persecution of Uzbeks in the south by the police has suggested a lack of control or even a pandering to rising Kyrgyz nationalism — perhaps in an effort to win passage of the constitutional referendum scheduled for Sunday, which would keep the interim president, Roza Otunbayeva, in power.

Ms. Otunbayeva said in an interview on Saturday in Bishkek that the referendum would stabilize the country, and she denied that she had lost control of the army or the police, or that they had taken part in the killing. However, she reiterated an appeal for international police intervention from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. "Because we have such monoethnic law enforcement, we badly need a third party that would help look after them," she said.

Many Uzbeks said they were attacked by the Kyrgyz Army and the police, riding armored personnel carriers and firing automatic weapons at civilians. Armored military vehicles pushed aside makeshift barricades at the entrances to Uzbek neighborhoods, witnesses said, allowing Kyrgyz mobs to storm in. But the first detailed government account, from a police commander, placed blame for the violence on Tajik mercenary snipers, hired by Mr. Bakiyev's family.

Last week, the head of the country's national security agency issued a statement saying that the younger son of Mr. Bakiyev, Maksim Bakiyev, had hired Islamic radicals from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, a group with ties to the Taliban, to infiltrate Uzbek neighborhoods and stoke conflict. The statement said the Islamic radicals fired rifles at civilians and then hid, only to reappear in other areas.

Reinforcing the message of external instigation, on Thursday an airplane flew over Bishkek dropping leaflets warning that "provocateurs" could foment ethnic violence in the capital, too, though the streets remained calm. Mr. Sariyev and former government officials say that the new leaders stumbled early in their rule by failing to quickly win over the police or oust commanders appointed by the former president."¹³⁰

A report by *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* in June 2010 highlights concerns that Kyrgyz officials were involved in attacking Kyrgyz citizens,

"Kyrgyz officials have said that seven of about 20 suspected snipers detained by security forces are foreigners, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. Kyrgyz State Security Service chief

¹³⁰ The New York Times, *After Kyrgyz Unrest, a Question Lingers - Why?* 26 June 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/27/world/asia/27kyrgyz.html?ref=kyrgyzstan>, accessed 18 November 2010

Keneshbek Duishebaev made the announcement while telling journalists on June 22 that the suspects were captured in special operations by security forces in Kyrgyzstan's Jalal-Abad and Osh regions.

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Kyrgyz rights activists criticized security forces for the alleged violent treatment and robbery of ethnic Uzbeks during a special operation in Osh's Nariman district the same day.

The Kyrgyz interim government stated earlier in the day that security forces had to open fire as some inhabitants of Nariman district refused to surrender their weapons and resisted the operation to remove barricades on the streets.

Osh Oblast Deputy Commandant Zamirbek Moldoshev told RFE/RL that Osh prosecutors have launched investigations into the cases of alleged beatings and robberies of ethnic Uzbeks in Nariman."¹³¹

An article published by *Human Rights Watch* in June 2010 states Kyrgyz security forces were involved in attacking ethnic Uzbeks,

"Kyrgyz troops wounded at least 20 people, two of whom died, during a security operation on June 21, 2010, in the predominantly Uzbek village of Nariman in southern Kyrgyzstan, Human Rights Watch said today. The operation followed the removal of barricades erected by the residents to protect the village.

"With tensions in southern Kyrgyzstan still extremely high, the military should avoid actions that further escalate the situation," said Ole Solvang, emergency researcher at Human Rights Watch who is in Osh. "These incidents underscore why so many Uzbeks say they don't trust the security forces. The police and army should be protecting people, not abusing them, during security operations."

The village was one of the flashpoints during the recent violence in Osh. Residents had barricaded themselves into the neighborhood, not allowing anybody to enter or to come close to it. They also threatened to blow up a fuel storage facility located next to the neighborhood. A joint group of Kyrgyz police and military forces entered Nariman, on the northern outskirts of Osh, at about 6 a.m. to conduct a search-and-seizure operation. Nariman residents told Human Rights Watch that groups of 15 to 20 armed uniformed men went from house to house demanding identification documents and information about the killing of the village police chief, whom police say Nariman residents killed on June 12, 2010.

After several residents had presented their documents, the security forces started beating them with rifle butts and kicking them, victims and witnesses told Human Rights Watch. Residents said police demanded to know who was responsible for killing the police chief. The forces also smashed cars, furniture, and windows, and took money and jewelry from the residents. More than a dozen victims were brought to the Nariman hospital, where Human Rights Watch researchers saw them arriving and interviewed them.

One of the witnesses told Human Rights Watch that the security forces entered her home and beat four male relatives, causing the death of her 58-year-old husband, Sharabiddin Dosmatov. She said, "We trusted them. They were from the army. We were just sitting there at home. They tore my husband's passport and broke our cell phones. Then they severely beat my husband with their rifle butts. He died five hours later from the injuries." Some said that the security forces tore, burned, or took away their passports. One resident, who showed Human Rights Watch the burned passports of her male relatives, said that the security forces told the family, "You're not people, you don't need passports anymore."

¹³¹ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Kyrgyz Official Says Foreigners Among Detained Snipers, 23 June 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Kyrgyz_Official_Says_Foreigners_Among_Detained_Snipers/2079988.html, accessed 2 November 2010

A high-ranking official from the Defense Ministry, who arrived at the hospital around noon, said the security forces who conducted the operation would be removed from the area and that an investigation would be opened. By 4 p.m. local time, the military had removed the checkpoints in the area but had not established any other security measures, leaving it vulnerable to potential further attacks. Residents told Human Rights Watch the military threatened to return to Nariman at night and "deal with the women."

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According to information collected by Human Rights Watch, the security forces took at least 11 men between the ages of 27 and 56 away from Nariman. The relatives did not know why or where they were taken."¹³²

A report by *VOA News* in October 2010 states that security forces were seen supporting armed groups of Kyrgyz civilians,

"On Sunday, three months after ethnic tensions in Kyrgyzstan exploded into a conflict that left hundreds dead, voters are to select a new parliament to create Central Asia's first parliamentary democracy. But in the southern city of Osh, where much of the killing unfolded, residents are still trying to put their lives back together.

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With the army and police composed almost entirely of ethnic Kyrgyz, the Uzbeks were the losers in what people in Osh now call simply "the war." Army and police units were seen supporting armed groups of Kyrgyz civilians.

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Now there are reports that young Uzbek men are going to Tajikistan for weapons training. Eager for revenge, they are easy recruits for the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, a religious fundamentalist group. For young men, little holds them in southern Kyrgyzstan. Thousands of ethnic Uzbeks, the wealthiest and best educated, left Osh this summer, largely for Russia, where they can work without visas."¹³³

An article published on 21 June 2010 by *The New York Times* details the involvement of security forces in violence in southern Kyrgyzstan,

"At dawn on Monday, security forces began a house-to-house sweep of the area, the Uzbek village of Nariman, demanding information about a Kyrgyz police official who was killed there this month.

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Witnesses said the troops kicked men and severely beat them with rifle butts during interrogations. One died of a gunshot wound, another died later of his injuries, and 25 were hospitalized, said Telman A. Badalov, a supervising hospital doctor.

Regional officials at first denied that there were casualties, but at a news conference later in the day, they acknowledged that two residents had been killed and 23 wounded, saying that troops fired because they faced armed resistance and that their actions were justified. A law enforcement official told the Interfax news service that seven men were arrested on suspicion of being "hired snipers."

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Anna Neistat, a researcher from Human Rights Watch, said that Nariman's barricades were breached on Sunday, and that troops entered at 6 a.m. on Monday. She said troops faced no resistance as they went from house to house demanding passports and information about the killing of the local police chief.

¹³² Human Rights Watch, Kyrgyzstan: Security Forces Abuse Civilians, 21 June 2010, <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/06/21/kyrgyzstan-security-forces-abuse-civilians>, accessed 18 November 2010

¹³³ VOA, Ethnic Tensions Linger as Kyrgyzstan Prepares for Elections, 6 October 2010, <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/europe/Ethnic-Tensions-Overshadow-Kyrgyzstans-Election-104426424.html>, accessed 12 November 2010

“Many people told us they opened their doors — they didn’t believe they would be beaten into a pulp,” Ms. Neistat said. “It’s a very clear illustration of the remaining hatred and tension between the ethnic groups, and between the population and law enforcement.”¹³⁴

A report published in June 2010 by *The New York Times* details allegations of the security forces’ involvement in violence in southern Kyrgyzstan,

“Able-bodied ethnic Uzbek men have remained behind in Kyrgyzstan to defend their wrecked neighborhoods, and many have told their families to stay put in Uzbekistan because it is too dangerous to return. Those warnings seemed borne out by renewed violence on Monday in southern Kyrgyzstan, with two Uzbeks killed in confrontations with Kyrgyz security forces.

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While the Uzbek refugees are nearly all citizens of Kyrgyzstan, the weak interim Kyrgyz government has not undertaken any significant campaign to help them or encourage them to return. It seems far more preoccupied with just regaining control over southern Kyrgyzstan.

Many Uzbeks said they were attacked in their neighborhoods by the Kyrgyz military, including soldiers riding armored personnel carriers and wielding automatic weapons. Members of the provisional Kyrgyz government, denying that any soldiers were involved, have generally blamed the ousted Kyrgyz president, Kurmanbek S. Bakiyev, for fomenting the violence. He has denied the accusations.”¹³⁵

In December 2010 *Amnesty International* reported that a number of law enforcement officials have been sanctioned for their actions in June events, expressing concern that these officials have been penalised for dereliction of duty, rather than for committing human rights violations,

“Allegations that Kyrgyzstani security forces may have failed to intervene to prevent violence have persisted. Additionally, allegations that Kyrgyzstani security forces colluded or participated in human rights violations, for example by distributing weapons, have also been made. Reports of security forces failing to stop the escalating violence appeared to be substantiated by some video material and consistent and credible eye witness accounts. According to the office of the Prosecutor-General, by the end of September 2010 a total of 30 criminal cases had been opened by both military and civilian prosecution authorities against military and law enforcement-officers for crimes such as abandoning their arms and not fulfilling their duties and obligations.

In a meeting with President Otunbaeva in July the Commanding Officer for Osh city stated that more than 100 law enforcement officials had been sanctioned for their role in the June events; they were dismissed, reprimanded or subjected to administrative measures. Amnesty International is concerned that most had been held responsible for dereliction of duty and not for human rights violations against civilians caught up in the June events, and by the growing evidence that the Kyrgyzstani investigative authorities are either unwilling or unable to investigate allegations of collusion or complicity of security forces in the commission of human rights abuses.”¹³⁶

¹³⁴ The New York Times, New Violence Reported in Kyrgyzstan, 21 June 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/22/world/asia/22kyrgyz.html?ref=kyrgyzstan>, accessed 12 November 2010

¹³⁵ The New York Times, Ethnic Uzbeks find calm but fear for those still behind, 22 June 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/22/world/asia/22uzbek.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=While%20the%20Uzbek%20refugees%20are%20nearly%20all%20citizens%20of%20Kyrgyzstan.%20the%20weak%20interim%20Kyrgyz%20government%20has%20not%20undertaken%20a%20significant%20campaign%20to%20help%20them%20or%20encourage%20them%20to%20return.%20It%20seems%20far%20more%20preoccupied%20with%20just%20regaining%20control%20over%20southern%20Kyrgyzstan&st=cse, accessed 12 November 2010

¹³⁶ Amnesty International, Kyrgyzstan: Partial truth and selective justice: The aftermath of the June 2010 violence in Kyrgyzstan, 16 December 2010, EUR58/022/2010, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR58/022/2010/en/2e04ab9b-73e6-46a1-98d7-563198e7255e/eur580222010en.pdf>, accessed 20 December 2010

C. Human Rights Situation

1. Protection of Ethnic Minorities in Kyrgyzstan

According to the *USDOS* 2010 Human Rights Report some minorities experience discrimination in Kyrgyzstan,

“The Kyrgyz Republic's 2007 constitution defines the country as a sovereign, unitary, democratic state based on the rule of law.

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Minorities alleged discrimination in hiring, promotion, and housing, but no official reports were registered with local authorities.

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The law designates Kyrgyz as the state language and Russian as an official language, and it provides for preservation and equal and free development of minority languages. Non-Kyrgyz-speaking citizens alleged that a ceiling precluded promotion beyond a certain level in government service. They also alleged that unfair language examinations disqualified some candidates for office. A government initiative to increase official use of Kyrgyz further raised concerns among non-Kyrgyz ethnic groups about possible discrimination.”¹³⁷

The *USDOS* further notes in its 2010 report,

“In previous years there were reports of isolated incidents of discrimination against ethnic Kurds. On April 26, an estimated 300 ethnic Kyrgyz and Russian residents of Petrovka village in the Chui Oblast protested the presence of Kurds, damaging Kurdish residents' houses and vehicles. The riot erupted as a result of perceived inaction by the authorities in arresting a 22-year-old Kurd accused of raping a four-year-old Russian girl. Riot police ended the violence and detained 80 persons. Authorities released all but three detainees, representatives of the opposition UPM and Green Parties, who voiced support for the Kyrgyz and Russian villagers and against local authorities (see section 3). The Kyrgyz and Russian villagers demanded that the local administration expel Kurdish families from Petrovka. While some families left the village voluntarily, most Kurds remained without further incident during the remainder of the year. On August 27, a district court convicted the Kurdish suspect and sentenced him to 20 years in prison.”¹³⁸

IRIN News reports on the background to ethnic and political tensions in a June 2010 article,

“Kyrgyzstan's population of 5.3 million comprises three main ethnic groups: Kyrgyz, Uzbeks and Russians. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the number of ethnic Russians has declined, particularly in the south, where internal migration has also altered the balance between Kyrgyz and ethnic Uzbeks.

In common with its neighbours in Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan has a mixed population dating back to the drawing of the region's borders by Stalin in the 1920s. Most of the 767,000 ethnic Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan live in the south, in the Kyrgyz part of Fergana Valley, the most densely populated area in the region where land is scarce.

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After independence in 1991, the ethnic make-up changed dramatically. Many Russians left and more Kyrgyz started to migrate to Osh, looking for schooling and work opportunities following the end of agricultural subsidies and the disintegration of collective farms. Tensions rose as Kyrgyz started to penetrate traditional Uzbek economic strongholds, including trade and commerce.

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¹³⁷ USDOS, 2009 Human Rights Report: Kyrgyz Republic, 11 March 2010 [file:///http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/sca/136089.htm](http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/sca/136089.htm), accessed 12 November 2010

¹³⁸ USDOS, 2009 Human Rights Report: Kyrgyz Republic, 11 March 2010 [file:///http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/sca/136089.htm](http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/sca/136089.htm), accessed 12 November 2010

Under first President Askar Akaev, the approach to minorities was more “flexible”, according to some analysts. Ethnic Uzbeks enjoyed economic freedom and some of their leaders were represented politically. However, they tended to be wealthy entrepreneurs, seen by many as out to further their own personal interests rather than building strategic links between the Kyrgyz establishment and the Uzbek community.

Kurmanbek Bakiev came to power in 2005 after Akaev was ousted in mass protests. He was from Jalal-Abad in the south, and began to sideline some of the Uzbek leaders who had benefited under Akaev - in certain cases that meant the redistribution of assets and property to his Bakiev clan.

After Bakiev was overthrown in April some Uzbek leaders, particularly in Jalal-Abad, openly supported the provisional government. Since independence, ethnic Uzbeks had shied away from politics, so such statements were seen as a cause for concern among the Kyrgyz political elite, according to one Kyrgyzstan-based analyst who spoke to IRIN on condition of anonymity.”¹³⁹

The *ICTJ* notes in an August 2010 report the challenges facing the Kyrgyz government in protecting ethnic minorities,

“The interim government faced formidable challenges when it assumed power in early April, and those have not diminished in recent weeks. The most immediate and existential challenge for the interim government has been to maintain its authority and public order in a country that has weak state resources and serious cleavages based on religion, ethnicity, and regional identity.

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Ethnic loyalties also pose a serious challenge to the interim government. In the initial weeks after the April uprising, there were isolated cases of violence against non-Kyrgyz in villages in the north of the country. In Maevka, for example, attempts by poor ethnic Kyrgyz to seize private property led to the deaths of several Meskhetian Turks.

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Although the massacres in the south appear to have been unleashed as a cynical ploy to destabilize the country and prevent the holding of a constitutional referendum, the violence was facilitated by longstanding tensions at the popular level between the Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities in the south. Uzbeks, who account for more than 30 percent of the population in the south, have long resented their political and cultural marginalization in independent Kyrgyzstan, through measures that have made it difficult for Uzbeks to gain representation in elective institutions, obtain employment in government agencies especially in the law enforcement and security sectors and to have access to educational and cultural opportunities in the Uzbek language.

The Kyrgyz, in turn, are trying to overcome decades of Russification policies in the Soviet era, which had marginalized Kyrgyz language and culture. So for some, the assertion of Uzbek cultural rights appears to impede the attainment of legitimate Kyrgyz interests. The economic resentment of some ethnic Kyrgyz against the many successful Uzbek merchants and businessmen who operate in one of the poorest regions in the country further complicates relations between the two communities.”¹⁴⁰

A *BBC* report in May 2010 cites the difficulties encountered by those living in the multi-ethnic south,

“In multi-ethnic Kyrgyzstan there are many villages like Mayevka where people of different nationalities have been living side by side. But there are fears that the events in Mayevka

¹³⁹ IRIN, Delicate ethnic balance, 17 June 2010, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportID=89526>, accessed 2 November 2010

¹⁴⁰ ICTJ, Kyrgyzstan in Transition, August 2010, <http://www.ictj.org/static/Publications/>, accessed 12 November 2010

could happen again. Ethnic clashes are particularly feared in the south of the country - home to a large Uzbek community.

Many people say they trust vigilantes more than police now. Whether or not the violence was triggered by those taking advantage of temporary lawlessness to seize property, or those who want the present administration to fail, ordinary people want reassurances that they will be protected.”¹⁴¹

The *Ferghana Information Agency* notes in an August 2010 various issues pertaining to the complexity of securing ethnic minority rights in Kyrgyzstan,

“Throughout many centuries the Ferghana valley has been populated by both Turkic and Farsi speaking nations. During Stalin’s regime the major factor was ethnic identity. Under some doubtful process the ethnic identify of people was defined there; as a result, Ferghana valley was divided between three national republics.

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While the ethnic identity becomes more and more politicized the real problems in the region lose their spot in the agenda. High level of unemployment and lack of resources substantially prevent normal socialization of young people. Looking for job, the impulsive young men have to migrate to other regions of the republic or abroad. The gap between rich and poor continues to increase. All three republics must admit they face the youth bulge. Therefore, the "ethnic" conflicts may be considered as the problem of youth that is ready to commit crimes for the sake of money and access to resources.

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Many people in Kyrgyzstan do not know how to react on violence. [] The fact that soldiers did not protect civilians, while some of them participated in the pogroms, is supersensitively accepted by Uzbeks. Many Uzbeks have no belief in law-based state; some others do not believe they will be able to live in peace with Kyrgyz. Does it mean the end of centuries-old coexistence of multi-ethnic community?

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The ethnic factor will remain easily mobilized until we keep ignoring the fact that most of Kyrgyz citizens do not associate themselves with criminals and want to build democratic state, until Uzbeks get real aid and safety from state and until demographic and economic situation is ignored.

Uzbeks were urged to come back in order to legalize the new government in Kyrgyzstan at the referendum on June 27. Most of Uzbeks came back because they are also interested in the stability. Despite many fears both sides are full of hopes and want to jointly build the future. The hope for peaceful future exists, but many problems are still a challenge.”¹⁴²

A *Transitions Online* article published March 2010 notes the difficulties experienced by ethnic Russians in Kyrgyzstan,

“Natasha Antonova was born 37 years ago in Osh and has lived here ever since. “It’s my hometown, but I’m planning to leave Kyrgyzstan,” she said recently. “Here, my 15-year-old son has no future.” [] Many cite the rise of Kyrgyz nationalism, a moribund economy, and a sense of being forgotten by Moscow as reasons for their departure. A recent deterioration of relations between the two countries is not likely to help.

“After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, a hostile environment emerged in this country for ethnic Russians, which was made worse by lack of any support from Russia,” said Pavel Stolyarenko, a marketing specialist based in Osh.

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¹⁴¹ BBC News, Kyrgyz lawlessness drives ethnic tensions, 4 May 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8651518.stm>, accessed 2 November 2010

¹⁴² Ferghna.ru, The glimmer of hope in bloody Kyrgyzstan, 11 August 2010, <http://enews.ferghana.ru/article.php?id=2654>, accessed 2 November 2010

Local analysts say that mostly retired people, older workers, schoolchildren, and unskilled laborers remain in the country, as well as a small number of qualified specialists. Most struggle to get by, particularly in the southern provinces of the country. “More than a half of my friends and acquaintances are poor. What the Russian authorities do, they deliver humanitarian aid, food, and clothes, to poor representatives of ethnic Russians. I personally hate taking this help, which is delivered as handouts,” said Svetlana Sinegubova,

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Svetlana Gafarova, an expert on interethnic relations and deputy director of the Center for Social Information and Forecasting in Osh, echoed the words of Sinegubova as well as many Russian-speaking residents of Kyrgyzstan. “Due to hard times in Russia in the ’90s, official Moscow kind of forgot about ethnic Russians in other republics of the former Soviet Union, including Kyrgyzstan,” said Gafarova, an ethnic Tatar. “Only after 2001 did the Russian Federation start providing some support to ethnic Russians and launched certain programs for those who decided to move to Russia. Here in Kyrgyzstan, neither the Russian Embassy in Bishkek nor the General Consulate based in Osh provide any visible aid. All they give is lip service.”

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“Ethnic Russians, who had been in the role of the Big Brother for many decades under the Soviets, became a minority and felt vulnerable following the growth of a Kyrgyz national identity. They couldn’t or didn’t want to play the role of a younger brother.” Russians here saw their status, and that of their language, downgraded, and their economic well-being become seemingly less important for the Kremlin.

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A growing nationalist mood caused a third wave of migration, which some people here call a “quiet migration.” Many ethnic Russians say that under cover of a language law which requires officials to speak Kyrgyz, Kyrgyz authorities have started forcing ethnic Russians from state bodies. “It’s difficult for us to find jobs in the public sector due to nepotism. The Kyrgyz prefer to hire their relatives or friends. In addition, it’s difficult to open small and medium-size businesses without having a protector in this corrupt business environment,” Sinegubova said.

Kyrgyzstan’s southern provinces, populated mostly by Kyrgyz and ethnic Uzbeks, have been virtually emptied of ethnic Russians. In 2009 about 22,000 ethnic Russians remained in the south, down from more than 126,000 in 1989. The rest of the country’s Russian citizens live in the north, concentrated in Bishkek.¹⁴³

A *Jamestown Foundation* report published June 2010 notes the high level of distrust amongst certain ethnicities in southern Kyrgyzstan,

“What is clear today is that Kyrgyzstan needs long-term external support to rebuild inter-ethnic trust between majority and minority ethnic groups in Osh and Jalalabad. Although Kyrgyzstan has already received ample attention from international organizations, including the UN and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as well as individual states, major challenges lie ahead. Over 100,000 Uzbek refugees are caught in limbo –they lost trust in the provisional government for its inefficient reaction to the crisis, and their place of refuge –Uzbekistan– is no dreamland. Ethnic Uzbeks are part of the native population in Kyrgyzstan who, like other Kyrgyzstanis, are aware of the stark difference between Uzbekistan’s illiberal regime and greater economic and political freedoms in Kyrgyzstan.

The aftermath of shock and horror in response to the violence in Osh and Jalalabad will linger for decades. It will take systematic and strategic action on the part of the Kyrgyz government and international community to restore trust and rebuild bridges between the Uzbek minority and the rest of the society. While it is important for the Uzbek refugees to rediscover their native cities and villages in Kyrgyzstan, inter-ethnic reconciliation has far

¹⁴³ Transitions Online, Leaving Home to Go Home, 25 March 2010, <http://www.tol.org/client/article/21298-leaving-home-to-go-home.html>, accessed 12 November 2010

greater importance for the country. "I apologize before the Uzbeks for those degenerates who conducted unimaginable atrocities. In Kyrgyzstan, most Kyrgyz don't accept this carnage. We bear responsibility for how my people [ethnic Kyrgyz] created these bastards," wrote one Kyrgyz blogger from Osh who accused armed mercenaries of instigating violence against Uzbeks in Osh and Jalalabad. The blogger reflects the sudden realization among many in Kyrgyzstan – if the country will prove unable to restore inter-ethnic peace, efforts to build a parliamentary system might be equally futile.

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In an effort to show genuine care for inter-ethnic reconciliation, the interim government issued a statement admitting its own inability to quell the violence and accusing external forces of killing many native Uzbeks. "Together we'll stop the violence," the statement's main slogan asserted. These strategies could prove invaluable during peacetime to boost inter-ethnic tolerance, but fall flat after four days of bloodshed that killed hundreds, injured thousands, and forces tens of thousands to flee."¹⁴⁴

A report by *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* in June 2010 highlights the desire of certain ethnic minorities to emigrate from southern Kyrgyzstan,

"Ethnic Tatars and Bashkirs living in the city of Osh in southern Kyrgyzstan are desperate to leave the city, where clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz have left around 190 dead and about 2,000 wounded, [].

One of the leaders of the Tatar community in Osh, Ravila Akhmerova, told RFE/RL by phone that ethnic Tatars and Bashkirs are trying to leave Osh. She said at least 80 of the city's 4,300 ethnic Tatars and Bashkirs were airlifted to Russia this week. She also said it is very dangerous to venture out into the street because of continued gunfire. Akhmerova said that although neither side appears deliberately to be targeting Tatars or Bashkirs, snipers are shooting indiscriminately from a distance.

Akhmerova added that some Tatars living in predominantly ethnic Uzbek-populated districts of Osh had to leave the city for Uzbekistan together with the ethnic Uzbeks."¹⁴⁵

A report by *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* in April 2010 notes attacks taking place on ethnic Dungans and Uyghurs,

"Antigovernment protest actions in Kyrgyzstan's northern town of Tokmok have reportedly escalated into ethnic clashes, []. Groups of protesters allegedly attacked people from two ethnic minorities -- Dungans and Uyghurs -- and their houses, cafes, and shops. Tokmok is about 30 kilometers east of the Kyrgyz capital, Bishkek.

A local opposition activist, Bakyt Nuraalu Uulu, told RFE/RL that 11 victims of the violence were brought to hospital. Five of them had gunshot wounds. Dungans are ethnic Chinese Muslims and Uyghurs are ethnic Turkic Muslims who originally came from China. According to 2008 statistics, there were some 60,000 Dungans and 51,000 Uyghurs among Kyrgyzstan's population of 5.25 million people."¹⁴⁶

A *Jamestown Foundation* article published in September 2010 states that ethnicity plays a key part in local politics in southern Kyrgyzstan,

"At a time when resources might be better spent on reconciling ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan, some local politicians prefer to use inter-ethnic tension to boost their popularity. "The titular ethnicity should be titular, it cannot be lower than other ethnicities living in this

¹⁴⁴ Jamestown Foundation, Rebuilding Inter-Ethnic Trust Becomes Kyrgyzstan's Major Concern, 17 June 2010, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=36507](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=36507), accessed 2 November 2010

¹⁴⁵ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Ethnic Tatars, Bashkirs Want To Leave Osh, 17 June 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Ethnic_Tatars_And_Bashkirs_Want_To_Leave_Osh/2074666.html, accessed 12 November 2010

¹⁴⁶ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Dungans, Uyghurs Attacked In Northern Kyrgyz Town, 9 April 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Dungans_Uyghurs_Attacked_In_Northern_Kyrgyz_Town_/2007251.html, accessed 12 November 2010

country. Let them respect our traditions, language and history, only then people will live peacefully. But if any nationality in our country, Russian, Uzbek, Turkish or Chinese claim they are on a par with the Kyrgyz or above them, then the state will collapse,” stated Kamchybek Tashiev, a member of Ata Jurt Party, hoping to score additional support for his party during the October 10 parliamentary elections [].

Following the violence in Osh and Jalalabad in June, when over 400 people reportedly died and more than 400,000 were forced out of their homes, Tashiev’s sentiments are shared by some in Kyrgyzstan, especially those who think that the conflict has been unjustly reported by the international media. “According to what I know, the Uzbeks started the fight,” said one Kyrgyz entrepreneur condemning most media reports. Such views reflect the overall concern shared by some in the country that ethnic Kyrgyz casualties during ethnic clashes have not received proper attention.

Unlike Tashiev, other politicians have abstained from bluntly expressing their views on how they see future inter-ethnic reconciliation developing. Instead, Tashiev has acquired passive support. Informally, Tashiev was praised for participating in calming the protests in the south and for calling upon both Uzbeks and Kyrgyz people to address their concerns in a constructive manner rather than by resorting to violence. If Tashiev’s party secures sufficient support in the elections, he might gain a seat in the parliament as he ranks second in his party’s list.

Politicians such as Tashiev are not fully aware of the differences between “titular” ethnicity and citizenship. The concept of “titular” nationality has been inherited from the Soviet era, when it had a positive connotation and most large ethnic groups were entitled to live under their own ethnic state. At the time, all states were treated as equal parts of the larger union. The leader of the Ata Meken Party, Omurbek Tekebayev, for instance, sporadically mentions the importance of civic rights, but he, like many other local politicians leaders, does not proactively confront his ethno-nationalist compatriots [].¹⁴⁷

The *Jamestown Foundation* report of September 2010 further notes,

“Overall, Kyrgyz politicians seem unable to draw a clear line between the perpetrators of the ethnic violence and those who were its unlucky victims. The absence of a credible investigation into the violence by an objective institution worsens these tensions. Rumors continue to spread across the country about how the violence began and who caused it. At this point, it seems that only local NGO’s and a few international organizations are currently engaged in the loosely coordinated reconciliation efforts.

The situation is further fueled by political leaders like Osh Mayor, Melis Myrzakhmatov, and the local Uzbek leader, Kadyzhan Batyrov. Both seek to boost ethno-nationalist sentiments among their respective ethnic groups and are believed to have played a key role in instigating the June violence.

Both Myrzakhmatov and Batyrov speak to their support base –frustrated Kyrgyz who doubt the international portrayal of the conflict and those who think that the Kyrgyz should take responsibility for killing Uzbeks, as well as local Uzbeks who cannot rely upon the Kyrgyz government’s protection.

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Among all its leaders, the former President, Askar Akayev, saw the importance in separating civic rights from ethnic identities. However, Akayev’s ready-made templates like “Kyrgyzstan is our common home” aimed at endowing all ethnic groups with equal rights are long forgotten and no major political party deems it important to center their political campaign on ethnic reconciliation programs.

¹⁴⁷ Jamestown Foundation, Ethno-Nationalist Slogans Penetrate Electoral Campaigns in Kyrgyzstan, 29 September 2010, [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=36959&cHash=2b5b19b2e1](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=36959&cHash=2b5b19b2e1), accessed 2 November 2010

It remains to be seen whether parties like Ata Jurt will be able to gain wide support. If ethnocentric political programs prevail in the elections, reconciliation efforts might prove to be more difficult for both domestic and international actors."¹⁴⁸

2. Freedom of Religion in Kyrgyzstan

According to the *USDOS 2010 Human Rights Report on Kyrgyzstan* freedom of religion is in principle guaranteed by the country's legislation. However, recently enacted law challenges the notion that all religions are treated equally by government authorities,

"The law provides for freedom of religion. The government generally respected this right in practice, although there were some restrictions, particularly regarding the activities of conservative Islamic groups that the government considered extremist and a threat to the country. The constitution provides for the separation of state and religion. Islam is the most widely practiced faith. The government did not officially support any religion; however, a 2006 decree recognized Islam and Russian Orthodoxy as "traditional religions."

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On January 12, the president signed the Law on Freedom of Religion and Religious Organizations, establishing numerous restrictions on the activities of religious groups. The law increases the membership threshold for registration of a religious organization from 10 to 200 individuals, which excludes many smaller faith groups, and prohibits any activities by unregistered religious groups.

The law also bans proselytizing, religious conversion, and private religious education at any level. After the law was implemented, some religious groups reported they were unable to register congregations of fewer than 200 members, and some groups reported that the new law banned them from distributing literature outside their churches.

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The State Agency for Religious Affairs (SARA) is responsible for promoting religious tolerance, protecting freedom of conscience, and overseeing laws on religion. Under the law all religious organizations, including religious schools, are required to register with SARA, and each congregation must register separately. The government has not registered the Hare Krishna or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and it suspended registration of the Universal Church in 2003 for noncompliance with government regulations.

SARA may deny registration if a religious organization does not comply with the law or is considered a threat to national security, social stability, interethnic and interdenominational harmony, public order, health, or morality. Once approved, the organization must register with the Ministry of Justice, which gives the organization legal status and allows it to own property and conclude contracts. Groups may appeal a SARA decision to the courts."¹⁴⁹

The *USDOS* further notes in its 2010 report,

"The law forbids the teaching of religion (or atheism) in public schools and in unregistered religious schools (the latter as a result of the 2009 religion law), but a 2006 decree allows the teaching of "the history of world religions" and "religion in general." On February 19, the minister of education signed a decree that prohibited students from wearing clothing indicative of religious preference. Muslim families protested the prohibition on religious attire, which included the hijab (headscarf). In response the minister amended the decree to "recommend against" religious clothing. However, there were continued reports that girls in

¹⁴⁸ Jamestown Foundation, Ethno-Nationalist Slogans Penetrate Electoral Campaigns in Kyrgyzstan, 29 September 2010, [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=36959&cHash=2b5b19b2e1](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=36959&cHash=2b5b19b2e1), accessed 2 November 2010

¹⁴⁹ USDOS, 2009 Human Rights Report: Kyrgyz Republic, 11 March 2010 [file:///http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/sca/136089.htm](http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/sca/136089.htm), accessed 12 November 2010

the south, particularly in Jalalabad Oblast, were prevented from attending school or dropped out because of restrictions on wearing the headscarf.

The new religion law requires that censors examine religious material before permitting its importation or distribution, and it prohibits the sharing of religious literature in public locations, with the exception of worship facilities or bookstores.”¹⁵⁰

A *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* report in May 2009 notes the ruling in the Kyrgyz Supreme Court upholding convictions on charges of religious extremism,

“Kyrgyzstan's Supreme Court has upheld verdicts against 32 people convicted of spreading ethnic and religious hatred, although it slightly reduced their sentences, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

The defendants, from the southern Osh region, were accused of organizing a mass gathering in October in the town of Nookat to protest a government decision not to allow a religious celebration for the Muslim holiday Eid al-Fitr.

On November 27, the Osh Regional Court sentenced the defendants to prison terms ranging from nine to 20 years. The Supreme Court reduced the sentences to between 5 and 17 years. The defendants complained that they were severely beaten and tortured while in detention.

Public defenders Dmitry Kabak and Aziza Abdyrasulova say many of those convicted - the majority of whom are ethnic Uzbeks - are uneducated and that two of them are women who were under 18 when they were arrested. Additionally, most are not fluent in Kyrgyz or Russian, the two official languages in which all the court hearings were held.”¹⁵¹

A further May 2009 report by *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* states that Islamic clerics in the southern Batken region have been ordered to attend training sessions conducted by the government authorities of Kyrgyzstan,

“All Islamic clerics in Kyrgyzstan's southern Batken region will be required to attend a one-month training course administered by the state, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. The program - which will last for about two years so that all Islamic clerics in the region can take it - is aimed at improving the educational level of all imams and to teach local mullahs how to recognize and battle against extremist Islamic organizations such as Hizb ut-Tahrir. There are currently 262 registered Islamic clerics in Batken and about 15 mullahs will take the course each month.”¹⁵²

Forum 18 states in its religious freedom survey in December 2009 that freedom of religion in Kyrgyzstan has deteriorated, particularly following the passing of new legislation regulating religious activities in 2009,

“When President Bakiev took power both registered and unregistered religious communities were able to function freely, despite a 1996 Presidential Decree by then President Askar Akaev requiring religious communities to register. Believers of all confessions stated that they were able to manifest their religion or belief freely, problems that occurred from time to time – for example pressure against schoolgirls wearing hijabs - being ascribed to the attitudes of local officials. The exceptions to this were the Falun Gong movement, banned

¹⁵⁰ USDOS, 2009 Human Rights Report: Kyrgyz Republic, 11 March 2010 [file:///http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/sca/136089.htm](http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/sca/136089.htm), accessed 12 November 2010

¹⁵¹ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Kyrgyz High Court Upholds Convictions For Religious Extremism, 20 May 2009, http://www.rferl.org/content/Kyrgyz_High_Court_Upholds_Convictions_For_Religious_Extremism/1735954.html, accessed 12 November 2010

¹⁵² Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Islamic Clerics In Kyrgyzstan To Attend Training Courses, 25 May 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Islamic_Clerics_In_Kyrgyzstan_To_Attend_Training_Courses/1739264.html, accessed 12 November 2010

under Chinese pressure in February 2005, and social pressure – including violent attacks - against non- Muslims manifesting their beliefs in southern Kyrgyzstan.

However, in January 2009 a highly restrictive new Religion Law came into force, amid strong international criticism. It broke the Constitution's guarantee that "No laws restricting freedom of speech and freedom of the press may be adopted," as well as breaking the guarantee of freedom of "thought, speech and press, as well as to unimpeded expression of those thoughts and beliefs" in Article 14 paragraph 6 of the Constitution.

Some of the Religion Law's restrictions – for example the wide-ranging bans on "proselytism" and the distribution of religious literature - restrict both freedom of speech and freedom of the press. A legal challenge in the Constitutional Court was dismissed on 24 July by Judge Chinara Musabekova with the claim that the "concrete constitutional rights of the applicants have not been violated."

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Excessive secrecy surrounded the preparation of both the withdrawn 2008 Decree and the preparation and passage of the 2009 Religion Law. Religious communities frequently complained about the secrecy surrounding the various proposed texts, and the absence of meaningful public consultation. They complained that some were not invited to roundtables, and that criticisms of the proposed Law were ignored."¹⁵³

Commenting on the requirement of religious groups to register, *Forum 18* states in its December 2009 report,

"The 2009 Law requires all religious communities to re-register with the then SARA (now replaced by the SCRA) by 1 January 2010; bars communities not registered by the SCRA and the Justice Ministry from receiving legal status, for which a SCRA certificate is necessary; and bars those with fewer than 200 members from registering with the SCRA. All the 200 must be adult Kyrgyz citizens.

Even assuming that a community has 200 members willing to act as founders – which many do not – the 200 are to supply their full name, full date of birth, home address, place of work and job title and passport number. The application also needs to include information about the organisation's religious faith, form of rites, history in Kyrgyzstan, attitude to marriage and the family, attitude to education, and attitude to military service. Finally, the application needs written permission from the local authorities for use of premises where it meets.

Unlike in other countries of the region, Kyrgyzstan's new Religion Law does not specifically demand re-registration for all religious communities. However, Article 30 point 3 of the new Law points out that "charters and other founding documents of religious organisations and missions are effective only in that part, which is not in contradiction to this Law." Article 9 point 3 declares that "there shall be no norms in the charter of a religious organisation or mission contravening Kyrgyzstan's Constitution or Law." Officials commented to one religious community during the Law's passage that it was hoped that this de facto re-registration demand would not be noticed.

Kanybek Osmonaliev, Head of the SCRA, claimed to *Forum 18* in October 2009 that – despite the Law's requirements - existing religious communities would not need to re-register as the Law was, he claimed, not retroactive. However, he would not reply when asked how this claim matches the Law's requirement that Charters of existing recognised religious communities must be "re-aligned".¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ *Forum 18*, Kyrgyzstan: Religious freedom survey, December 2009, 17 December 2009, http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=1388, accessed 12 November 2010

¹⁵⁴ *Forum 18*, Kyrgyzstan: Religious freedom survey, December 2009, 17 December 2009, http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=1388, accessed 12 November 2010

Human Rights Watch states in its 2010 report that Kyrgyzstan's enactment of new legislation pertaining to religious rights had been criticized by overseas observers,

"In January 2009 President Bakiev signed a controversial new law "On freedom of conscience and religious organizations." The OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the Council of Europe's Venice Commission had criticized the law in October 2008 for, among other things, its "vagueness," "discriminatory registration requirements," and "interference with religious autonomy."

Nevertheless, the law signed by the president retained these problematic provisions. The new law increases from 10 to 200 the number of people required to officially register a religious organization, and restricts freedom of expression by prohibiting proselytizing and the dissemination of religious material in public places or by going house to house."¹⁵⁵

Forum 18 states in an April 2010 report that religious communities and civil society human rights groups want the authorities to afford religious worship greater respect and protection,

"Following ex-President of Kyrgyzstan Kurmanbek Bakiev's departure from the country, Forum 18 News Service has found that a wide range of religious communities and civil society human rights groups want the authorities to respect freedom of religion or belief. Many are highly critical of the harsh new Religion Law brought in by Bakiev's government in 2009, and want it to be abolished or radically changed.

The Religion Law was strongly criticised by a wide range of Kyrgyz and international religious communities and human rights defenders, including the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union, and members of the European Parliament. Tursunbek Akun, the country's Human Rights Ombudsperson, told Forum 18 that "this Law is not in accord with international human rights standards".

The Law's harsh provisions include: a ban on children being involved in religious organisations; a ban on "aggressive action aimed at proselytism"; a ban on the distribution of religious literature, print, and audio-video religious materials; and de facto compulsory re-registration of all registered religious organisations [].

Since the Law's entry into force, state actions have included banning unregistered religious activity and raids on meetings for worship. The government showed little sign of either a willingness to implement human rights commitments, or an understanding that genuine security depends on genuine respect for human rights [].

Kanybek Imanaliyev, Head of the Press Service of the Interim Government led by Roza Otunbaeva, told Forum 18 on 15 April that "We want to establish freedom of speech and freedom of religion. We will reform the Constitution, the laws as necessary and the Religion Law."

Asked whether religious communities will be able to carry on their normal religious activity while the laws are being changed, Imanaliyev said that "no one can answer that question at the moment. We need to first stabilize the situation. However I do not think there will be any conflicts on religious grounds in the meantime. The people of Kyrgyzstan are tolerant to different religions and confessions." [] "The laws need to be amended including the Religion Law."

Kyrgyz human rights organisation Foundation for Toleration International told Forum 18 on 15 April that they have not changed their position since June 2009, when their President Raya Kadyrova asked the authorities "why citizens' rights to religious freedom should be considered as something that endangers public security." She also emphasised that the

¹⁵⁵ Human Rights Watch, World Report 2010, p.426, <http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2010>, accessed 10 November 2010

"voices and concerns of various religious groups were not heard by Kyrgyzstan's authorities."¹⁵⁶

A June 2010 report by *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* notes the mistreatment of an Islamic cleric in Bishkek,

"Kyrgyzstan's acting chief mufti, Suyun-Hajji Kuluev, has been hospitalized after being beaten during a religious gathering in the capital Bishkek, his family has told RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service. Kuluev's relatives told RFE/RL that about a dozen unidentified assailants attacked him on June 6 during a gathering of religious clerics and that he was hospitalized with concussion and injuries.

The Interior Ministry's press service told RFE/RL that since Kuluev has not filed an official complaint, no details of the incident are available. The press service of the Muftiat, the country's highest religious authority, told RFE/RL that the attackers were shouting that Kuluev must resign. Kuluev was recently named acting top cleric following the resignation of Abdushukur-hajji Narmatov.

Narmatov, in turn, had replaced long-serving mufti Murataaly-Hajji Juman-uulu, who stepped down following the deadly clashes between antigovernment protesters and security forces on April 7 that led to the resignation of Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiev. Juman-uulu was later kidnapped and taken to the outskirts of Bishkek. His abductors demanded a \$1 million ransom. He was released in late April."¹⁵⁷

A September 2010 report published by *Ferghana Information Agency* notes the conviction of 4 Muslims for inciting ethnic hatred while based at a place of religious worship during the June upheavals in 2010,

"4 local residents were convicted in the Kara-Suu district, Osh Oblast of Kyrgyzstan, for alleged incitement of ethnic hatred in the night of June 11, 2010. Also allegedly, they were using the religious faith places – the minarets of the mosques.

Bishkek-based AKIpress agency reports with the reference to the source in the district office of public prosecutor that, using the loudspeakers, Zhamalidin Isakov and Abdymukhtar Shukurov urged the local residents "not to sleep but to prepare for fight" in the Nurdar village, the Nariman rural area of the Kara-Suu district. Nurmukhammad Matraimov and Yuldoshbay Kyrgyzbaev did the same in the mosque of the Kashkar-Kyshtak rural area.

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The criminal cases against these people were filed under Kyrgyz Criminal Code: article 233 ("Call for mass riots") and 299 ("The incitement of religious, race, national hostility"). All four of them were sentenced to 4 years of imprisonment in the penal colony settlement. Neither AKIpress nor Azattyk specified which of the conflict parties – Uzbek or Kyrgyz community – were called by these people for riots. It has to be mentioned that the text of azan (prayer) is a standard one. It is designated for all Muslims regardless of ethnic identity: Kyrgyz, Uzbeks and representatives of other nationalities go to the same mosques in Kyrgyzstan. Another thing is that if it was used as the signal for someone. Who this someone was is still a question.

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It has to be mentioned that brainstorming about the reasons and instigators of the tragic conflict, which took place in southern Kyrgyzstan on July 27, Kyrgyz Ombudsman Tursunbek Akun said: "We know now that Uzbeks were the first to attack. It was well

¹⁵⁶ Forum 18, Kyrgyzstan: "Restore religious freedom at least to the level we had before Bakiev", 16 April 2010, http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=1432, accessed 2 November 2010

¹⁵⁷ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Kyrgyz Mufti Hospitalized After 'Severe' Beating, 8 June 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Kyrgyz_Mufti_Hospitalized_After_Severe_Beating/2065313.html, accessed 12 November 2010

organized. In the night of June 10-11 there were fireworks in mahallahs (Uzbek residential areas) while at 2am there was azan (call for prayer) that is usually announced at 5.15am".

In the opinion of the Ombudsman, these calls by the ethnic Uzbeks became the signal to start the riots. On the other hand, there are still no official results of the investigation of riots in Osh and Jalal-Abad. In the mean time, Open Position public foundation interviewed people, living in the area of the mosque that was the platform for untimely call for prayer in the night of June 10-11.

"The elders, reading azan in Osh, did not call for riots", quotes Dmitry Kabak, the head of Open Position foundation. He informed that according to the interviewed people, on contrary, muezzins were trying to warn people about upcoming threat."¹⁵⁸

The *International Crisis Group* notes in a December 2009 report attitudes toward more hard-line Islamists in Kyrgyzstan have changed,

"Kyrgyzstan has traditionally been more liberal in its attitude towards Hizb ut-Tahrir than Tajikistan or Uzbekistan, where HT members have for years faced long prison terms. The country's previous president Askar Akayev, who was overthrown in 2005, at times suggested, albeit without any perceptible follow-up, that a dialogue with the movement was possible. Despite Uzbekistan's urgings – for example during a major crackdown on Uzbek HT activists following a spate of bombings in Tashkent in February 1999 – Kyrgyzstan did not follow its neighbour's hard line. For many years the only offences Islamists could be charged with were crimes such as incitement of inter-ethnic or interconfessional enmity and calls to change the constitutional order. Despite ominous names they carried only light sanctions: fines, imprisonment of up to one year or a suspended sentence. Frequent amnesties ensured that even those who did receive custodial sentences were quickly released, while many avoided prosecution altogether by paying a bribe.

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Over the last decade, the laws were tightened up, penalties were hardened, and new clauses added to the criminal code in both Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. [] Eight Islamic organisations are currently banned in Kyrgyzstan, and fourteen in Kazakhstan. These were followed by changes to the criminal code in both countries. In Kyrgyzstan, HT members can now be charged for being part of a criminal (or an organised) group, which carries a longer sentence. This allows heavier terms for related offences such as distribution of leaflets and other HT literature, which fall under extremism laws.

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The *International Crisis Group* further notes in its December 2009 report a stiffening of sentencing policy in Kyrgyzstan towards Islamic extremists,

"A Kyrgyz court in 2009 handed down even heavier terms – up to twenty years – against participants in demonstrations in the southern Kyrgyz town of Nookat. The demonstrators,

¹⁵⁸ Fergana.ru, Kyrgyzstan: People are condemned for unusual call to prayer and call for help, 30 September 2010, <http://enews.ferghana.ru/article.php?id=2665>, accessed 12 November 2010

¹⁵⁹ International Crisis Group, Central Asia Islamists in Prison, 15 December 2009, pp.5-6, http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/central-asia/b97_Central_Asia_Islamists_in_Prison.ashx, accessed 12 November 2010

who included some HT members, had each been charged with between five to eight offences.

A senior Kyrgyz interior ministry official summed up the rationale for the trials. "We brought them to their senses. They understood that there is a real power in this country". But he also admitted that the harsh sentences had another consequence. "It's now harder to identify the leaders ... we are tougher with them, so they have gone underground".

In the latter part of 2009, Kyrgyzstan's Security Council declared its willingness to consider restoring the death penalty for serious crimes, among them offences connected to extremism. The head of the State Committee for National Security, Marat Sultalinov, proposed public executions: "then order would be restored in the country within two or three days".¹⁶⁰

An October 2010 report published by the *Norwegian Helsinki Committee* notes the lack of religious freedom in Kyrgyzstan,

"In Kyrgyzstan the state continues to violate its commitments to implement freedom of religion or belief for all. Limitations on this fundamental freedom and other human rights have increased – in both law and practice – under President Kurmanbek Bakiev. A harsh new Religion Law was adopted in 2009, despite international protests, and a similarly harsh new Law on Religious Education and Educational Institutions is being drafted. There are also plans for a new Law on Traditional Religions.

State actions, including banning unregistered religious activity and raids on meetings for worship, show little sign of either a willingness to implement human rights commitments, or an understanding that genuine security depends on genuine respect for human rights. As a Baha'i put it: "Our country has so many urgent problems – poverty, the lack of medicine, AIDS, crime, corruption. Why don't officials work on these instead of making life harder for religious believers?"

State actions and policies which directly undermine the implementation of OSCE commitments both undermine the security of individual states and OSCE regional security. As workshops organised by Kyrgyz NGO Foundation for Tolerance International and the example of neighbouring Uzbekistan demonstrates, repression increases support for extremist and violent movements. In this context, it is increasingly important that both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan implement their OSCE commitments as part of seeking and implementing alternatives to repressive state actions."¹⁶¹

A *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* article published in July 2010 details differing views on the role of Islamic fundamentalism in the June 2010 disturbances in southern Kyrgyzstan,

"Six weeks after ethnic violence between Kyrgyz and minority Uzbeks engulfed southern Kyrgyzstan, people are gathering for Friday prayers at the Imam Sharahshi Mosque.

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Imam Rashod qori Kamalov tells the roughly 2,000 Uzbeks here not to think of themselves as Uzbeks and others as Kyrgyz. "We're Muslims first," he says. "Islam compels us to be brothers."

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Officials accuse banned Islamic groups of taking part in the violence. Melis Myrzakmatov, the mayor of Osh, the city at the epicenter of the violence, says "bearded men yelling 'Allahu Akbar' were seen among crowds of Uzbek attackers. But after his sermon, Kamalov

¹⁶⁰ International Crisis Group, *Central Asia Islamists in Prison*, 15 December 2009, pp.5-6, http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/central-asia/b97_Central_Asia_Islamists_in_Prison.ashx, accessed 12 November 2010

¹⁶¹ NHC, *Broken Promises: Freedom of Religion or Belief Issues in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan*, 1 October 2010, <http://www.nhc.no/php/>, accessed 12 November 2010

says there has been no evidence so far to back the claims, which he says are dangerous and are fueling deeper antagonisms.

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Some of those attending today's service appear nervous. But Kamalov says neither he nor the members of his mosque, all ethnic Uzbeks, are casting blame for what happened last month. He says he wants the authorities to uncover what caused the violence. "Only justice and honesty can bring reconciliation," Kamalov says.

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One of the groups the government blames for the violence is Hizb-ut Tahrir, a banned Islamic group that advocates the creation of an Islamic caliphate in Central Asia through peaceful means. One member, who refuses to give his name, echoes the opinions of others, saying the government has produced no evidence to connect his group to last month's events."¹⁶²

3. Racial discrimination against Uzbeks in Southern Kyrgyzstan

A *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* article published in June 2010 provides a detailed analysis of the issues surrounding Uzbek-Kyrgyz relations in southern Kyrgyzstan, and the problems of discrimination,

"It will go down as one of the crueler ironies of the interethnic clashes convulsing southern Kyrgyzstan that the violence was fueled, in part, by ethnic Uzbeks' concerted effort to integrate into Kyrgyz political life.

In the aftermath of the April 7 uprising that prompted the flight of former President Kurmanbek Bakiev, ethnic Uzbek leaders sensed an opportunity to end discriminatory practices in the south and gain a political voice - an effort that already began to backfire in late May when Uzbeks and Kyrgyz clashed at the People's Friendship University in Jalal-Abad. The latest clashes, which left hundreds if not thousands dead and displaced an estimated 400,000 Uzbeks, may serve as the death knell for the dream of integration.

"My interpretation is that Uzbeks were trying to be good citizens of Kyrgyzstan, that they bent over backwards to represent themselves as loyal citizens of Kyrgyzstan," said Morgan Liu, a cultural anthropologist at Ohio State University who has spent the better part of 16 years studying ethnic Uzbeks in the Ferghana Valley. "One of the real tragedies from this is that, whatever the success of that project, it's now closed off. There's no possibility of rescuing that project."

As Uzbeks slowly return to their homes in southern Kyrgyzstan, the question looms if any kind of deeper rapprochement is possible, if Kyrgyzstan can guarantee long-term security for ethnic Uzbeks, and if the Kyrgyz government can somehow satisfy Uzbeks' overarching demand for greater meaningful participation in the Kyrgyz state. "I'm afraid there's no good news," Liu said. "The big question is what does it mean to be a loyal Kyrgyzstani citizen without invoking an ethnic identity. Until that's worked out, there's no place ultimately for ethnic Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan."¹⁶³

The June 2010 report by *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* further notes,

"The background to the ethnic Uzbeks' push for rights and voice is the long-standing complaint that they are treated as second-class citizens in Kyrgyzstan. When I visited Osh and Jalal-Abad in May, Uzbeks charged that extortion rackets, aided by or including police, routinely shook down Uzbek businesses for money while Uzbeks were frequently fired from

¹⁶² Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Wary Locals Question Allegations Of Islamist Role In Kyrgyzstan's Ethnic Violence, 24 June 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Wary_Locals_Question_Allegations_Islamist_Role_Kyrgyzstan_Violence/2108572.html, accessed 2 November 2010

¹⁶³ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Kyrgyzstan's Uzbeks Say 'Our Voices Are Not Heard' , 22 June 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Kyrgyzstans_Uzbeks_Say_Our_Voices_Are_Not_Heard/2079281.html, accessed 18 November 2010

jobs in Kyrgyz businesses without cause and schools in Uzbek neighborhoods remained chronically underfunded.

While Uzbeks were prominent in business, often to the consternation of Kyrgyz who found themselves squeezed out of commercial sectors, they were underrepresented in parliament, in local administrative positions, and in the police and military.

"The situation we see today has been brewing for years," Jalaliddin Salahudinov, head of the Uzbek National Center, said when I interviewed him in May. "There are no equal opportunities. There's a barrier between Uzbeks and government, and because of that barrier our voices are not heard."

It was common for southerners to describe Uzbeks and Kyrgyz as "living in parallel," readily distinguished by dress, appearance, and language, with distinct traditions, fairly low rates of intermarriage, and infrequent business partnerships. Ethnic Uzbek leaders said relations worsened under Bakiev, who stoked Kyrgyz nationalism and gave his cronies free rein to monopolize wealth and power in the south - often at Uzbeks' expense.

In keeping with a reputation for political quiescence, few Uzbeks participated in the political demonstrations surrounding the overthrow of President Askar Akaev in 2005. Despite anger within the ethnic Uzbek community, they seemed to keep on the sidelines as the political opposition worked to mobilize against Bakiev's increasingly despotic regime.

When interviewed in May, Abdurashid Khojaev, president of the Uzbek National Center in Osh, seemed to sum up the sense of caution among Uzbek community leaders. "We do not want power or authority, and we do not want clashes," he said. "There's no word among Uzbeks about autonomy. We saw how much blood there was in 1990 because of gossip about autonomy. We know that if we start a fight with the Kyrgyz, it could open the way for extremists, terrorists, and the Taliban."

In the first week of May, an ethnic Uzbek delegation met with leaders of the interim government in Bishkek to call for provisions in the draft constitution that would benefit the Uzbek community. Demands included proportional representation for ethnic Uzbeks at all levels of government administration and state recognition of the Uzbek language, meaning that street signs, textbooks, and official documents would be printed in Uzbek as well as Kyrgyz.

Uzbek leaders also called for the deletion of a line on official documents that signifies the ethnicity of the document holder and for a change in the country's official name, from the Kyrgyz Republic to Kyrgyzstan, in an attempt to counter a perceived nationalistic direction in the articulation of Kyrgyz statehood.

At a local level, Uzbek leaders in the south worked with police to strip dark tinting off car windows and to pull over cars driving without license plates -- a response to numerous complaints that extortionists in unmarked cars with darkened windows were shaking down Uzbek businesses with impunity.

Though many of the Uzbek demands appeared innocuous, the fact that minority Uzbeks were tampering with a delicate interethnic dynamic was enough to infuriate some Kyrgyz. Madeline Reeves, a research fellow at the University of Manchester and an expert on ethnic Kyrgyz in the Ferghana Valley, described the push for recognition of the Uzbek language in particular as a sensitive issue -- indelicately handled -- that inflamed raw nerves for many Kyrgyz.

"I was struck by the language [demand], because who would it hurt?" Reeves said. "In one sense nobody, but as far as a lot of Kyrgyz are concerned that could be the first step towards autonomy."¹⁶⁴

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty highlights in its June 2010 report the fears of ethnic Kyrgyz that Uzbeks will seek greater autonomy in the south,

"The prospect of an Uzbek autonomous region in southern Kyrgyzstan has been a source of constant suspicion for decades. While the ethnic Uzbek leaders I spoke with uniformly denied interest in an autonomous region, many Kyrgyz contended that, in private, Uzbeks continue to long for a different political arrangement - either an autonomous region or a union of some sort with Uzbekistan.

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"A lot of this is rooted in deep-seated anxiety about whether Kyrgyzstan can survive as a nation, whether Kyrgyz are always going to lose control to a larger neighbor," said Reeves. "There's a feeling that if Uzbeks have any kind of political recognition or there's an increase in Uzbek representation in parliament, that threatens our very viability as a nation state."

If the push for constitutional reforms disturbed the Kyrgyz, the activities of Batyrov were a direct affront. Batyrov, a wealthy businessman with a large following among Uzbeks in Jalal-Abad, gave a televised interview in which he suggested that Kyrgyz security forces could not be trusted to protect ethnic Uzbeks and that alternatives, namely Uzbek patrols, would supplant Kyrgyz in protecting Uzbek neighborhoods in southern cities. Though Batyrov later apologized for his remarks, his interview reinforced the suspicion of many Kyrgyz that minority Uzbeks were pursuing a secret agenda to break free of Kyrgyz authority.

"It's not the Uzbek nation but Uzbek leaders -- Batyrov particularly -- who are responsible for what happened," said Tavaldo Rosaliev, a former parliamentary deputy. "They were talking a lot about [the south] becoming an autonomous oblast, raising separatist issues. Interethnic dynamics have to be dealt with delicately, and that speech of Batyrov's was like a match to a powder keg." An Uzbek lawyer who asked that he be quoted anonymously said that Batyrov's actions were misinterpreted but that he bore responsibility for the violence. "Of course Batyrov's speeches raised a lot of questions, kind of led to this thing happening," he said. "Batyrov's mistake was he didn't involve local Kyrgyz in his meetings. There was gossip that he was locked up in his university, preparing actions, and Kyrgyz thought he was preparing something against them."

When I interviewed Batyrov by telephone in May, shortly before his televised interview, he insisted that he had no interest in special arrangements for ethnic Uzbeks, only that they have the same basic rights as Kyrgyz. "The question of an autonomous oblast has never been raised among Uzbek leaders. It's the Kyrgyz who keep saying that Uzbeks want an autonomous region," he said. "If Kyrgyzstan provided its citizens with a high-school education, we wouldn't be seeing this situation. If people had jobs, if they were busy with something else, this wouldn't be a concern."¹⁶⁵

An *IRIN News* article published in June 2010 details tensions between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in southern Kyrgyzstan,

"Confrontation last week between the residents of two villages on both sides of the border of an Uzbek enclave in Kyrgyzstan highlights the risk of further conflict over the use of natural resources in Ferghana Valley, according to analysts.

¹⁶⁴ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Kyrgyzstan's Uzbeks Say 'Our Voices Are Not Heard', 22 June 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Kyrgyzstans_Uzbeks_Say_Our_Voices_Are_Not_Heard/2079281.html, accessed 18 November 2010

¹⁶⁵ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Kyrgyzstan's Uzbeks Say 'Our Voices Are Not Heard', 22 June 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Kyrgyzstans_Uzbeks_Say_Our_Voices_Are_Not_Heard/2079281.html, accessed 18 November 2010

Shared by Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the rich and fertile Ferghana Valley is Central Asia's most densely populated area with some 11 million residents. Since the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Ferghana Valley has had intermittent localized conflicts over water and land.

Over the past week, local media reported sporadic violence between some Kyrgyz residents of Sogment village passing through Hushyar village in the Uzbek enclave of Sokh. Sogment residents said about 10 cars belonging to them were damaged by Hushyar villagers and drivers and passengers were beaten up. Kyrgyz villagers reportedly blocked the road linking the enclave with the Uzbek mainland. Some local NGO activists said the issue of pastures was the primary reason for this recent tension as parts of the Uzbek-Kyrgyz border had not been demarcated or delimited since the Soviet break-up, causing disputes over land and resources."¹⁶⁶

An October 2010 report by *Transitions Online* notes the educational difficulties experienced by ethnic Uzbeks children in their schooling,

"June's outburst of violence in southern Kyrgyzstan left hundreds of children from the Uzbek community without schools. Mobs burned down two public schools in Osh, and an apparent attempt to burn down a school in Jalalabad was unsuccessful. That leaves some children, like Akbar Mamatov, to live and study in tents, having lost their homes as well.

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Still, Mamatov's classmates were luckier than their counterparts at the Hamza school, []. Authorities say those students will be sent to other schools in the city. The old site for the Hamza school, which lacked a playground, is too small build a new facility that would include modern requirements like a playground and space for part-time courses outside the school year, according to a source in the city's education department who asked to remain anonymous. The destruction and rebuilding of the school is a sensitive issue, as some Uzbeks charge that Kyrgyz destroyed the old building in order to replace it with commercial premises.

In the meantime, Kyrgyz authorities and international donors have set up a settlement of 11 tents on the outskirts of the city, where Osh experiences its own version of urban sprawl. The area has no infrastructure, and a dirt road connects the tent school with the nearest Uzbek neighborhood, where the Tolstoy school once stood.

One tent serves as the teachers' lounge and a kitchen, but as the school still lacks electricity, no hot drinks or food are available. Students complain of the cold mornings in the tents and say it is uncomfortable, especially when it rains. Nevertheless, teachers here seem determined to limit the disruption to their students' lives, despite the ethnic tension that is still very much alive in Osh.

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Also in short supply are textbooks. "Before the June events, we lacked school textbooks anyway, but now in a class of about 20 pupils we have only five or six," said an eighth-grade student, who introduced himself as Aibek. "Those who have books do their homework. Others just attend classes, but they don't get bad grades because our teachers go easy on them because of the difficult conditions we have now."

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Other schools face a converse problem, as they remain standing but are losing their students. Although reliable statistics are not available under the circumstances, schools teaching in the Uzbek language in Osh seem to have lost as many as half of their students, and ethnic Uzbeks continue to leave the country. "This year I took my daughter to the first grade for the first time, and there was only one class, compared with four last year where my neighbors' children study," said Khakim R., an Uzbek taxi driver. School administrators

¹⁶⁶ IRIN News, Concerns over tension in Uzbek enclave border areas, 6 June 2010, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportID=89380>, accessed 12 November 2010

complain that local authorities prohibit them from releasing the real number of pupils attending schools.”¹⁶⁷

An October 2010 report by *EurasiaNet* highlights the level of violence that may be directed toward ethnic Uzbeks in southern Kyrgyzstan,

“Kyrgyzstan breathed a collective sigh of relief on October 10, when parliamentary elections were held in a peaceful atmosphere. But an ugly incident outside an Osh courthouse on October 13 served as a reminder that the Central Asian nation has a long way to go before the trauma of last June’s violence in southern Kyrgyzstan fully heals. The Osh incident involved friends and relatives of a Kyrgyz traffic police officer murdered in the Uzbek neighborhood of Cheremushki in June.

Just before the opening of a trial session, they took the law into their own hands, attacking an ethnic Uzbek defendant, along with three relatives of the accused. “They pulled my hair, they beat me, and they kicked me,” 53-year-old Asalkhon Ismeddinova, an aunt of one defendant, told *EurasiaNet.org* at Osh City Hospital following the attack. She had difficulty speaking due to a swollen jaw, and her face was covered in cuts and scratches.

“No one asked us anything and we were pulled out of the car. No one even knew what we might be guilty of,” her husband, 61-year-old Ikram Ismeddinov, said with blood seeping from a bandage around his head. The Ismeddinovs are not accused of any crime; they had gone to court to support their nephew. Like all but one of the trial defendants, he is charged not with the murder of the traffic policeman but with the theft of the officer’s car.

Another defendant facing an auto theft charge was also beaten up when he arrived at the trial. Fifty-year-old Sukhbatullo Nizamkhojayev – who is free on bail and did not arrive in the guarded prisoner convoy – was nursing two broken ribs and facial injuries, but he said he was discharging himself from the hospital since he feared the mob would hunt him down and assault him again if he stayed.

Back at the courthouse, enraged relatives of the murdered police officer refused to talk to journalists. One man punched a *EurasiaNet.org* reporter in the face and relatives of the murder victim threatened further physical reprisals as around 30 police officers stood by without intervening. This incident is emblematic of the inter-ethnic hostility that continues to linger in Osh following the June spasm of violence. It also highlights concerns about whether justice is being served in trials taking place connected to the ethnic violence.”¹⁶⁸

Transitions Online reports in an April 2010 article on the ethnic tensions that developed after President Bakiev was ousted,

“Bakiev left behind an unstable situation, one that features continuing standoffs in Jalal-Abad between his supporters and backers of the provisional government. Local observers believe interest groups are seeking to take advantage of the unsettled situation.

[] Tension exploded into the open on 14 April as Uzbek community leaders tried to participate in a kurultai (public gathering) in Jalal-Abad in support of the interim local government but were denied access amid scuffles and insults. The incident was symptomatic of the way Uzbeks, who form 32 percent of the town's population, are treated, argues local entrepreneur and philanthropist Kadyrjan Batyrov. “They insulted us,” he said with a shrug during an interview at the Batyrov People’s Friendship University, a state of the art institution whose construction he financed. “They insult us every day.”

¹⁶⁷ *Transitions Online*, The Canvas Schoolhouse, 12 October 2010, <http://www.tol.org/client/article/21863-the-canvas-schoolhouse.html>, accessed 12 November 2010

¹⁶⁸ *EurasiaNet*, Kyrgyzstan: Osh Courthouse Clash Shows Emotions Still Raw Among Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, 14 October 2010, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/62152>, accessed 12 November 2010

Batyrov is among those accusing Kyrgyz authorities of trying to deny ethnic Uzbeks a voice. "It's political monopoly," he said. "They adopt laws that are advantageous for them. The rest of the population is discriminated against. Their rights are restricted." Batyrov argues that Uzbeks also face day-to-day discrimination. "You can see it at the bazaar and on the street every day," Batyrov said. "They say, 'Uzbeks, go back to Uzbekistan. These are Kyrgyz lands.' There's audacious pressure, intimidation of people."

Local authorities acknowledge strained relations but say that with Bakiev gone the situation is improving. "When Bakiev was in Jalal-Abad, that tension was present, but when he left it subsided," Maksat Jenbekov, the town's acting mayor, said. "It was at the level of rumor – that the Uzbeks would rise up, the Kyrgyz would rise up and they would fight." The tension in the town was partially caused by a rumor that Uzbeks would come to power in local government, Jenbekov said, adding that – while the views of ethnic minorities must be taken into account – the titular nation should predominate in positions of power. "This is Kyrgyzstan. It should be a Kyrgyz in power."¹⁶⁹

The *Transitions Online* report of April 2010 further states,

"This is "monoethnic rule in a multiethnic state," argues one local journalist, speaking on condition of anonymity, who is based in Osh, another town with a large Uzbek population, about 120 kilometers south of Jalal-Abad. The journalist argued that the provisional government risked squandering an important opportunity; minority groups could act as a stabilizing factor in an unstable political environment, the journalist contended. "Over the last few years the flag of nationalism has been raised," agrees another Osh-based journalist, Javlon Mirzohujayev, director of the independent Mezon TV station. "If previously it was relations in the everyday sphere, during Bakiev's time a planned, scheduled system began."

Journalists working for Uzbek-language media complain that broadcasting legislation requiring outlets to disseminate at least half of their programming in Kyrgyz is discriminatory. They say they are filling a niche since the national TV channel broadcasts in Kyrgyz and Russian but not Uzbek, and they complain that language laws are too restrictive, inhibiting the use of Uzbek in the public domain.

In the nearby town of Uzgen, Uzbeks do have political representation – the deputy mayor, Mukhamadjon Nosirov, is an ethnic Uzbek who laments any prospect of enmity between two peoples who have "lived together down the ages."¹⁷⁰

The Kyrgyz authorities are accused of having participated in the destruction of ethnic Uzbeks' identity documents according to a June 2010 report by *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*,

"Ethnic Uzbeks in Osh in southern Kyrgyzstan say Kyrgyz government troops raided their neighborhood on June 21, beating people with rifle butts and destroying their personal documents. Two people were killed in the raid after authorities say government troops were fired upon. The allegations of beatings and identity destruction are among the strongest claims yet of government involvement in violence between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz that killed more than 200 people last week.

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An RFE/RL correspondent was approached by more than a dozen ethnic Uzbek men and women in the Osh neighborhood of Nariman on June 21 shortly after the raid. The villagers showed burned or ripped Kyrgyzstan passports that they say were destroyed by troops in army uniforms.

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Anyone whose passport has been destroyed would likely not be able to take part in a national referendum on a new constitution that the interim government in Bishkek has

¹⁶⁹ Transitions Online, Aftershocks, 20 April 2010, <http://www.tol.org/client/article/21374-aftershocks.html>, accessed 12 November 2010

¹⁷⁰ Transitions Online, Aftershocks, 20 April 2010, <http://www.tol.org/client/article/21374-aftershocks.html>, accessed 12 November 2010

scheduled for June 27. Mamyр Nizamov, head of an Uzbek council of elders in Osh, says that instead of calming ethnic tensions in southern Kyrgyzstan, government troops are now creating disturbances. Nizamov claims there has been a pattern of behavior by Kyrgyz troops who tell ethnic Uzbeks they have not earned their Kyrgyz citizenship and then destroy their passports."¹⁷¹

EurasiaNet states in a June 2010 article that some in southern Kyrgyzstan believe that the Kyrgyz authorities are persecuting the ethnic Uzbek civilians in the area and blaming them for the violence that occurred,

“A tenuous sense of stability seems to be returning to southern Kyrgyzstan, just weeks after the region experienced the worst bout of violence since independence. But, below the surface, Uzbeks are still seething, and some experts worry that prevailing conditions may represent only a temporary lull.

The surprisingly large turnout of Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan’s June 27 constitutional referendum prompted provisional government leaders to sound an upbeat note about the process of reconciling the Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities in southern Kyrgyzstan, following five days of violence in mid-June that left hundreds dead and hundreds of thousands displaced.

Yet even though Uzbeks voted in higher-than-expected numbers, it doesn’t mean that they have forgotten the recent past. Observers note that many Uzbeks -- who appear to have suffered disproportionately in terms of both casualties and property damage – are thinking about revenge. These feelings are fueled in part by a widespread perception among Uzbeks that Kyrgyz provisional leaders are trying to cover-up the June 10-14 violence.

Uzbeks also believe that authorities are conducting follow-up operations designed to neutralize the Uzbek community’s ability to exert influence over the political process. Under current circumstances, then, genuine reconciliation between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks would seem a long way off. It could get worse before things get better, observers fear. The key, they say, is whether Uzbeks act on their desire for revenge by obtaining guns in large quantities.

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Nazira Satyvaldiyeva, an expert in conflict resolution and head of the Eurasia Foundation’s Osh field office, suggested that lingering fear is prompting both Uzbeks and Kyrgyz to seek arms. “Both Kyrgyz and Uzbek friends tell me, ‘I am scared, I have to buy a gun. I have to defend my family and my house.’ Uzbeks and Kyrgyz, and even Russians, are saying this,” Satyvaldiyeva said. “Now we have clear divisions between people with guns and those who want to continue living a peaceful life,” she continued. “I think the main thing we have now is that people are scared and fear brings more problems.”

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To skeptical Uzbeks the arrests of some Uzbek leaders offers proof that the provisional government is not intent on justice, but instead is using the violence to enhance its political position. In Jalal-Abad, Kyrgyz state television reported on June 26 that authorities are holding several Uzbek community leaders, including Ulugbek Abdusalomov, a newspaper editor, and Ozodbek Karamatov, the rector of the People’s Friendship University. The detainees are facing charges of fomenting inter-ethnic tension.

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Prosecutors have also targeted Uzbek leaders in Osh. On June 23, local news agencies reported, the Kyrgyz national security service (SNB) found guns and explosives in the house of Inomjon Abdurasulov, a former MP whose current whereabouts are unknown.

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Many Uzbeks believe that authorities planted weapons on the Uzbek suspects and that their arrests were politically motivated. The arrests are also fostering an impression that Uzbeks are being set up to take the blame for the violence. “Interethnic conflict continues

¹⁷¹ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Ethnic Uzbeks Accuse Kyrgyz Troops Of Destroying Passports, 22 June 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/At_Least_Two_Dead_In_Osh_Raid_On_Uzbek_Neighborhood/2077856.html, accessed 12 November 2010

because the investigating group from Bishkek is working in a one-sided manner. About 90 percent of the detainees are Uzbek; I didn't see any Kyrgyz detainees," said an Osh-based lawyer, speaking on condition of anonymity. "But, there were more Uzbeks dead. I am Kyrgyz myself, but I just want to be objective about that. That is very dangerous, that might provoke a second wave of clashes. ... [Authorities] are just teasing Uzbeks now."¹⁷²

A *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* report in August 2010 notes that the re-housing of those affected by the June 2010 upheavals subjects local authorities to charges of discrimination,

"When the violence in Kyrgyzstan's southern city of Osh subsided in June, one thing was plain: whole neighborhoods of minority Uzbeks had been burned to the ground, while most buildings belonging to ethnic Kyrgyz remained standing. More than 350 people had been killed and hundreds of thousands displaced. Now, as the city begins the slow task of rebuilding, Osh Mayor Melis Myrzakmatov says he wants to help prevent future violence by relocating residents into new neighborhoods that would include Uzbeks and Kyrgyz. "Mixed neighborhoods didn't suffer during the violence," he said. "So we want to create integrated neighborhoods where children [of various ethnicities] play together and people live side by side and make friends."

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The violence was a terrible tragedy," he said, "people lost property and loved ones, so we're trying to act sensitively, give them all options." But locals worry they'll be forced to leave their houses for smaller apartments, in a region where ethnic tensions are still escalating and the central government has little control.

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Myrzakmatov said the final decision on the city's plan will be made "with the population's participation." But earlier this week, Deputy Mayor Taalai Sabirov told RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service the plans have already been drawn up and that the authorities were "working" with those reluctant to leave their houses. "We're telling them they should move in the interest of our city and country," he said. "If they don't want to live in apartments, we'll give them land. But they can't stay in their old locations because the general plan has already been completed." But locals say they weren't consulted and many fear they'll be forced to move into apartment blocks against their will. Osh resident Mamlakat Emilova, an ethnic Uzbek, says she would rather rebuild her own house.

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Experts agree that divided neighborhoods have exacerbated tensions between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. Political analyst Mars Sariev says extended Uzbek families traditionally live in houses grouped together. "That's a problem because they live in isolated communities unconnected to other neighborhoods," he says. "So the resettlement plan makes sense." Still, Sariev says he understands why Uzbeks would be upset over a resettlement program that would end centuries-old social patterns, saying it's far from clear that implementing the plan is a good idea.

Aziza Abdurasulova, head of the Kylum Shamy human rights organization, believes it is. She says isolation breeds mistrust and that integration is vital for preventing future conflict. "I don't want people's rights to be violated, but the recent violence was the third such major incident where hundreds died," she says. "We have to draw conclusions, to integrate and learn to live peacefully as neighbors." Abdurasulova says the authorities don't have the right to force people off their land, a point President Roza Otunbaeva has made public as a condition tied to reconstruction aid from international donors.

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Legal experts say people can be deprived of private property only by a court decision in every individual case, and only if the state pays full market prices. But that hasn't calmed worries among Uzbeks in Osh. Some say the local authorities, mainly ethnic Kyrgyz, are using June's violence as an excuse to carry out a previously existing reconstruction plan that targets their neighborhoods.

¹⁷² EurasiaNet, Perceptions of Persecution May Increase Uzbeks' Desire for Revenge, 30 June 2010, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61440>, accessed 2 November 2010

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But so far, controversy over the reconstruction plans in Osh is adding to concerns about stability. As tensions continue to rise, no one is ruling out the possibility that more ethnic violence will undermine the government and play into the hands of politicians consolidating power in the south."¹⁷³

The Guardian reports in an October 2010 article that ethnic Uzbeks in southern Kyrgyzstan face discrimination,

"There was no arrest warrant, no warning. At 5am, 10 Kyrgyz police officers rushed the flimsy tent where Bakha, an ethnic Uzbek, had been sleeping. They dragged him away and drove off. Bakha's small son was discovered by relatives several hours later, terrified, weeping and alone. "They are like the Gestapo," Bakha's older brother Rustam said, recalling his brother's brutal arrest last month. Four months after ethnic violence erupted in southern Kyrgyzstan, with 2000 Uzbeks murdered in a series of shadowy state programs, Kyrgyz security agencies are continuing to persecute Uzbeks, Rustam said.

Uzbeks complain of arbitrary detention, mistreatment in custody, legal abuses and extortion. But local Kyrgyz officials now blame the minority Uzbek population for unleashing the unrest. The police and other agencies continue to pounce on Uzbek youths, often demanding money, Rustam said. "My brother had just sold his car for \$5,000. Two days later, he was arrested. This wasn't a coincidence. The police told his wife to pay them \$1,500. In return they say they will drop murder charges against him," he alleged. "They want to get rid of us. But where are 1.5 million [Uzbek] people supposed to go?"

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In the volatile south, tensions between Uzbek and Kyrgyz continue to smoulder. Bakha, now in jail, lives in Osh, Kyrgyzstan's second city, and the epicentre of June's disorder. Until his detention 16 days ago he had been camping out in a UNHCR tent next to the ruins of his home. A Kyrgyz mob led by soldiers had burned down his house. The pattern was repeated elsewhere: with 2,000 houses torched, and 400,000 forced to flee. Today many residents in Osh's Cheremushki district still live amid the rubble. The Uzbek district was once prosperous. Most of its spacious family villas are now blackened shells.

Many Uzbeks said they didn't intend to take part in the election. "I'm not going to vote," one resident, Ibeg, explained, drinking tea in the wreck of his home with his elderly mother. He added: "They burned down my house. They killed my neighbour. They wanted to kill my family. They are all involved." Their kitchen garden was destroyed in the blaze. "We are morally and physically broken," another resident, Uzbek Kirgizbaev, said, pointing to the spot where his neighbour, a young woman called Zarifa, was hacked to death. "Most people just sit at home. If they go out on the street they risk being arrested," he said.

According to Kirgizbaev, many young Uzbeks have left to find jobs in Russia. Some 460 Uzbeks from Osh are being held in police jails. Others are being kept in a basement prison run by the SNB, Kyrgyzstan's security agency. Kyrgyz law-enforcement officials have charged the Uzbeks with inciting ethnic hatred, mass disorder and complicity in murder. So far, no Kyrgyz suspects have been arrested.

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Observers note that harassment of Uzbeks in Osh is nothing new. The police force, procurator and city administration are all Kyrgyz, with Uzbeks – who formed the mercantile class – not represented. The precise causes of June's pogroms are still a mystery. But it is clear that many Kyrgyz, whose nomadic forefathers lived in yurts, have long been jealous of better-off Uzbek neighbours."¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, In Kyrgyzstan, Uzbeks Criticize Osh Reconstruction Plan, 11 August 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/In_Kyrgyzstan_Uzbeks_Criticize_Osh_Reconstruction_Plan/2125117.html, accessed 12 November 2010

¹⁷⁴ The Guardian, Uzbek minority still faces persecution as Kyrgyzstan goes to polls, 10 October 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/oct/10/kyrgyzstan-uzbek-osh-ethnic-cleansing>, accessed 2 November 2010

4. Human Rights Violations During and After the June Unrest in Southern Kyrgyzstan

In a June 2010 report *Human Rights Watch* lists human rights violations suffered by civilians during the unrest in southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010 as including beatings, killings, rape, looting and the destruction of property,

“Mass violence erupted on June 10 when hundreds of Uzbeks gathered near a dormitory in the center of Osh, allegedly in response to recent scuffles between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz. The Uzbek crowd torched several buildings, including a casino, and set fire to several cars. Violence escalated when rumors spread that people in the Uzbek crowd had raped a Kyrgyz girl in the dormitory, a rumor that turned out to be false.

Human Rights Watch researchers working in southern Kyrgyzstan from June 10 to 22 documented the massive looting and destruction of civilian property and widespread acts of violence by Kyrgyz and Uzbek mobs in the city of Osh and the towns of Jalal-Abad and Bazar-Kurgan.

While both ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks fell victim to the violence, Uzbek neighborhoods were particularly affected as mobs of ethnic Kyrgyz, many of them reportedly from villages surrounding the city of Osh, repeatedly attacked Uzbek areas. Over the following days mobs looted and burned to the ground an estimated 2,000 houses in at least six Uzbek neighborhoods in Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Bazar-Kurgan. Human Rights Watch documented dozens of killings and beatings during these attacks, interviewed two Uzbek victims of rape, and received detailed information about the rape of nine others, ages 15 to 40, from the doctor who had treated them.

Hospital records and witness testimony indicate that the majority of dead and wounded are young Uzbek and Kyrgyz men. However, dozens of women and children were also shot or burned in their homes. Human Rights Watch research suggests that the violence - particularly the attacks on Uzbek neighborhoods - was systematic and, at least in some cases, well-organized. Witnesses in several neighborhoods told Human Rights Watch that Kyrgyz men in military uniform riding on top of an armored personnel vehicle would first clear the barricades that the Uzbeks had erected at the entrance of their neighborhoods. A group of armed men, including gunmen strategically placed on rooftops, would then fire at people in the neighborhood, forcing them to flee.

Once residents fled or hid in their basements, the next group, in civilian clothes, entered the neighborhood and systematically looted the houses, often loading the loot on cars stolen on the spot. Another group then followed, setting the looted houses on fire with Molotov cocktails or gasoline. In several cases documented by Human Rights Watch, the mob also beat and killed residents who did not manage to escape or who tried to prevent the destruction of their homes.

Both Uzbek and Kyrgyz mobs seem to have specifically targeted the other ethnic group.”¹⁷⁵

On 14 June 2010 the *UN High Commissioner for Human Rights* reported that the fighting “appears to be orchestrated, targeted and well planned.”¹⁷⁶

In December 2010 *Amnesty International* also reported accounts of orchestrated violence,

“Amnesty International received information from several sources indicating that large groups of young Kyrgyz men had been brought in to Osh city and to Bazar-Korgan from outlying areas, such as Batken, Alai, Aksi. Although official reports said that they had

¹⁷⁵ Human Rights Watch, *Kyrgyzstan: New Evidence Emerges on Brutality of Attacks*, 25 June 2010, <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/06/25/kyrgyzstan-new-evidence-emerges-brutality-attacks>, accessed 12 November 2010

¹⁷⁶ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *UN rights chief urges swift action to quell violence in Kyrgyzstan*, 14 June 2010, <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=10150&LangID=E>, accessed 12 November 2010

presented themselves spontaneously to local authorities in their towns and villages when information about the violence in Osh became known and volunteered to help defend their kin, unofficial sources claimed that recruiters had gone around Kyrgyz neighbourhoods. According to these sources, transport, food and shelter had been organized for the men. Weapons were allegedly distributed and the men were reportedly paid. Amnesty International was also told that there was evidence to suggest that the men were supplied with alcohol and, in some instances, narcotics.

Contacts told Amnesty International that they had received eyewitness and video testimony which showed older men directing groups of young men armed with weapons or bats and sticks to attack Uzbek neighbourhoods. These reports are consistent with the evidence collected by other non-governmental organizations, such as Human Rights Watch and International Crisis Group.

These reports claimed that following the initial outbreak of violence in the centre of Osh the subsequent attacks on mahallas followed a consistent pattern. The first “wave” of attackers would be composed of armed men, in some cases supported by armoured military vehicles that led the way into the neighbourhoods, firing at defenders and clearing barricades if necessary. The second “wave” would be composed of younger men, who would first loot, and then burn, the neighbourhood houses.

The prevailing narrative of events from the Kyrgyz side, however, differs significantly in terms of both who orchestrated and organized the violence, and who were the primary targets. Most of the Kyrgyzstani officials interviewed by Amnesty International in September claimed that the June violence had been sparked by pre-organized actions by sections of the ethnic Uzbek community in Osh. Other non-governmental sources also told Amnesty International that there were reports that some Uzbeks had stockpiled arms in the weeks preceding the violence. Some members of the National Commission of Inquiry who met with Amnesty International blamed Uzbek political and community leaders of having made repeated calls for autonomy for Uzbeks in the south from May, thereby inciting sections of the Uzbek community in Osh and Jalal-Abad regions to prepare for such an event. Members of the Ombudsman’s commission also told Amnesty International that Uzbeks set off fireworks in some of the mahallas. This was reportedly a signal for Uzbeks to attack. The azan (call to prayer) which reportedly was called in some Uzbek mosques in Osh city in the middle of the night was according to the Ombudsman’s commission a call for Uzbeks in the mahallas to fight. Members of the National Commission were concerned about the alleged distribution of weapons by the military and law enforcement to Kyrgyz civilians as well as the seizure of weapons from police and military units by Kyrgyz and Uzbek civilians.”¹⁷⁷

The *UN High Commissioner for Human Rights* was further reported to be “shocked by the scale of the inter-ethnic violence which is reported to have led to more than a hundred people being killed, and well over a thousand injured, since fighting erupted in the city of Osh on 10 June, spreading to the neighbouring town of Jalalabad over the weekend.”¹⁷⁸

The *UN High Commissioner for Human Rights* reported on 15 June 2010 that “It seems indiscriminate killings, including of children, and rapes have been taking place on the basis of ethnicity.”¹⁷⁹

The Independent reported in June 2010 that Kyrgyz gangs were accused of committing genocide against Uzbeks,

¹⁷⁷ Amnesty International, Kyrgyzstan: Partial truth and selective justice: The aftermath of the June 2010 violence in Kyrgyzstan, 16 December 2010, EUR58/022/2010, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR58/022/2010/en/2e04ab9b-73e6-46a1-98d7-563198e7255e/eur580222010en.pdf>, accessed 20 December 2010

¹⁷⁸ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN rights chief urges swift action to quell violence in Kyrgyzstan, 14 June 2010, <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=10150&LangID=E>, accessed 12 November 2010

¹⁷⁹ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN rights chief urges swift action to quell violence in Kyrgyzstan, 14 June 2010, <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=10150&LangID=E>, accessed 12 November 2010

"In the worst ethnic violence this Central Asia nation has seen in 20 years, marauding Kyrgyz gangs were last night accused of "committing genocide", burning ethnic Uzbeks out of their homes and embarking on a three-day rampage of killing, which some human rights activists on the scene estimated has killed more than 500 people."¹⁸⁰

Human Rights Watch further notes in its June 2010 report allegations that government security forces participated in the violence,

"Many Uzbeks told Human Rights Watch that they believe government forces participated in the attacks on their neighborhoods, referring to the presence of armed men in military uniform among the attackers and the use of armored personnel carriers (APCs) to remove the Uzbek barricades.

Local law enforcement officials admitted to Human Rights Watch that APCs had been used in the attacks. They claimed, however, that the mobs had stolen weapons and military vehicles from nearby military bases. A high-level local official in Jalal-Abad told Human Rights Watch that at least 59 automatic guns, a grenade launcher, and two armored vehicles were taken from two military bases in Jalal-Abad. The official told Human Rights Watch that "in order to avoid bloodshed the troops abandoned the base," but claimed that they had first "broken" the military vehicles to avoid them being used by the mob.

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Ferghana Information Agency reports in a June 2010 article that human rights defenders are at risk following the upheavals in southern Kyrgyzstan in June,

"The officials do their best to reduce the scale of the tragedy, hide facts of arsons and crimes. The human rights advocates, reporting their observations and directly communicating with the residents of southern Kyrgyzstan, are also in danger, says Tolekan Ismailova, the head of Citizens against Corruption center.

Today we observed the Emergency Response Ministry workers going around mahallah (Uzbek residential districts) and villages and asking people not to report arsons, but to say these were accidental fires in order to be able to get compensation – she told *Ferghana.Ru*. In fact, this way the officials are trying to avoid paying compensations. Tolekan Ismailova and her colleague Aziza Abdurasulova were recently invited to the district prosecutor's office. They viewed the possible reason in the fact that they asked for release of three Uzbek guys, detained illegally.

However, in the prosecutor's office they had to deal with two unpleasant issues. First, the

¹⁸⁰ The Independent, Kyrgyz gangs accused of 'genocide' as death toll rises, 14 June 2010, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/kyrgyz-gangs-accused-of-genocide-as-death-toll-rises-1999652.html>, accessed 12 November 2010

¹⁸¹ Human Rights Watch, Kyrgyzstan: New Evidence Emerges on Brutality of Attacks, 25 June 2010, <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/06/25/kyrgyzstan-new-evidence-emerges-brutality-attacks>, accessed 12 November 2010

human rights activists were asked to explain why they provided distorted information to 24.kg news agency about the number of victims at the Nariman village. Secondly, it turned out that Ismailova and Abdurasulova are the witnesses in the mass riot case, filed on June 12.

Overall, Aziza and I spent 3 hours in the interrogation room. We still have no idea why human rights advocates are involved in the criminal cases – said Ismailova. According to her, there are very few human rights advocates from Bishkek, working with local colleagues in Osh and witnessing the scale of devastation there. She said that human rights activities are resisted by few officials and mentioned the detention of Azimzhan Askarov, the head of Vozduh NGO. In the opinion of Ferghana.Ru sources, Azimzhan Askarov's story is the case of "police revenge" when policemen look for guilty not among criminals, but among "eternal enemies" – journalists and human rights activists.

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We are concerned about the wide scale detention of ethnic Uzbeks – says Tolekan Ismailova. – They are illegally arrested. The police toss the drugs and weapons to them. Their parents are asked 10 000 som (\$1=46 som) to \$5000 for their release. The guerilla war, kidnapping, blackmail are awful; police and soldiers continue violating human rights.”¹⁸²

A report by the *BBC* in June 2010 notes the kidnapping of ethnic Uzbeks officials in the southern city of Osh,

“The six officials, all women, were seized by a crowd at a polling station in the southern city of Osh, the Central Election Commission said.

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The kidnapped women were due to act as officials during a referendum on Sunday. Kyrgyzstan will vote on a package of constitutional reforms which would give greater powers to the prime minister.”¹⁸³

An *IRIN News* report of July 2010 cites the concern of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights that Kyrgyz law enforcement officials have been responsible for human rights abuses in the June 2010 upheavals,

“As a 40-day mourning period comes to an end on 20-21 July, security forces have begun taking measures to prevent further unrest, []. However, there are many reports of abuses of power by law enforcement officials, intimidation and arbitrary detentions of ethnic Uzbeks.

Navi Pillay, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said on 20 July that hundreds of Uzbeks were being imprisoned because of their ethnicity and that local authorities were "routinely turning a blind eye" to abuses.”¹⁸⁴

Refugees International reports in a July 2010 article that witnesses claim security and military forces participated in the violence,

“In mid-June 2010, attacks by unknown assailants triggered violence between majority Kyrgyz and minority Uzbek communities, particularly in Osh, Jalal-Abad and Bazarkorgon.

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Whatever the catalyst, there was little official effort to stop the carnage. Witnesses repeatedly pointed to elements of security and military forces as participating in the violence, citing evidence of advance planning, availability of weapons, and the presence of armored personnel carriers, trucks, snipers and teams of looters and arsonists. Refugees International heard numerous accounts of unprovoked killings, shootings, stabbings, looting

¹⁸² Ferghana.ru, Kyrgyzstan: The human rights advocates are in danger, 30 June 2010, <http://enews.ferghananews.com/article.php?id=2647>, accessed 12 November 2010

¹⁸³ BBC, Ethnic Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan freed after abduction, 23 June 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10394312>, accessed 12 November 2010

¹⁸⁴ IRIN News, Kyrgyzstan: Not yet out of the woods, 21 July 2010, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportID=89906>, accessed 2 November 2010

and burning. Brutal gender-based violence enflamed tensions in a culture of traditional family and religious views.

“For four days people came to kill us,” said M. “They burned our houses and if they returned and something remained, they burned it again. Our cattle were taken and burned.” “They robbed our houses... and at the border we saw with our own eyes men who had been burned and we met girls who had been violated,” A. said. One wife, still in shock, witnessed her husband going outside to protect his property then being attacked, repeatedly stabbed and finally murdered with an axe blow. Such sights now haunt her and her community.

In the Shark area of Karasuu, a group of twelve women told how the violence affected them. One husband who went to the bazaar was told, “You shouldn’t come here. You are Uzbek.” One woman’s son had been covered with gasoline and burned, while another’s son was shot by a sniper. A third woman’s husband was kidnapped and is still missing. The women want their sons and husbands to hide because they are at risk of false arrest, kidnapping or attack. Many women from destroyed Uzbek mahalas are afraid to go to the market or to a hospital fearing the presence of armed men or hostile attendants.

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Displaced Kyrgyz women are also fearful. Some were attacked or witnessed violence and burning. They live in government buildings or temporary shelters with security, but they prefer to travel in groups fearing Uzbek taunts or even attacks. Some were resisting returning to neighborhoods where they were the minority and they wanted help to move.”¹⁸⁵

A report by *The New York Times* in July 2010 notes the Kyrgyz government’s acceptance that some law enforcement officials be investigated for alleged crimes,

“The police in Kyrgyzstan’s volatile southern region have been pursuing their investigation into the recent ethnic clashes that left hundreds of ethnic Uzbeks dead by rounding up more Uzbeks and subjecting them to beatings and other abuses. The abuses raise further questions about the ability of Kyrgyzstan’s weak central authorities to control the tumultuous south of the country, [].

A spokesman for Ms. Otunbayeva said that the government was making efforts to halt the abuses. At least three criminal investigations had been opened and 11 police officers had been detained in Osh and elsewhere in the south of the country, said the spokesman, Farid Niyazov, in a telephone interview. “Given the continued tensions between a part of the ethnic Uzbek population and the police and soldiers, Otunbayeva has ordered the prosecutor general to immediately open criminal investigations for every violation of human rights,” Mr. Niyazov said.”¹⁸⁶

Amnesty International reports that excessive force was used by security services during raids after the initial violence,

“After the initial violence subsided security forces started to carry out search operations in villages and homes, ostensibly to seize weapons and detain those responsible for committing violent crimes. These large scale operations were carried out over a couple of weeks until the end of June. There were numerous reports that security forces were using excessive force during these operations and that they were targeting Uzbek neighbourhoods. Human rights organizations, journalists and community leaders reported that hundreds of men, the majority of them Uzbek, were arbitrarily detained and beaten or

¹⁸⁵ Refugees International, Kyrgyzstan: Ensuring Security and Human Rights Required to Put Country Back on Course, 29 July 2010, <http://www.refugeesinternational.org/policy/field-report/kyrgyzstan-ensuring-security-and-human-rights-required-put-country-back-course>, accessed 2 November 2010

¹⁸⁶ The New York Times, In Southern Kyrgyzstan, Uzbeks Become Targets of Police Abuse, 14 July 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/15/world/asia/15kyrgyz.html?ref=kyrgyzstan>, accessed 2 November 2010

otherwise ill-treated and tortured during such raids and subsequently during their detention.”¹⁸⁷

Refugees International reports in a July 2010 article that human rights violations are ongoing following the end of civil unrest in June 2010 in the south of Kyrgyzstan,

“The new interim government has focused on obtaining estimates of property damage, reconstruction plans and needed re-documentation of affected citizens, but it has failed to reign in harassment, arbitrary detention, arrests and threats to its citizens and particularly to both Kyrgyz and Uzbek human rights advocates.

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local residents, Uzbek victims whose homes and businesses were destroyed now find themselves facing interrogations, arbitrary detentions and arrests as “organizers of violence.” NGOs report Uzbeks face increasing demands for payments of bribes to avoid arrest or to bring about relatives’ release from detention. Other Uzbek families face ransom demands for kidnapped or missing family members. Those trying to leave the region face a gauntlet of obstacles including demands for bribes and restrictive check-points.

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People whose homes were destroyed live in fear of being forced from their communities or having to face the harsh winter in tents or homes open to the elements.”¹⁸⁸

In December 2010 *Amnesty International* expressed concern that efforts to restore order have been undermined by ethnic bias, continuing human rights violations and corruption,

“efforts to restore order to the regions affected by the violence, and investigate the crimes committed during it, have been undermined by strong indications of ethnic bias and ongoing human rights violations, including widespread reports of arbitrary detentions, torture and ill-treatment and unfair trials. Unless this trend is rapidly reversed there is a grave danger that injustice and impunity will prevail precisely when accountability is most needed.

Given this pressing need for truth and justice, Amnesty International is concerned about the lack of institutional capacity and expertise at the national level to conduct a thorough, independent and impartial investigation into the June violence. High levels of corruption, as well as reports of collusion of law enforcement officials, contribute to concerns about whether any criminal investigation at the national level would be independent and impartial and consider all evidence available. This is particularly true in the light of consistent and credible reports that during the violence security forces either failed to prevent or colluded in the commission of human rights violations.”¹⁸⁹

Human Rights Watch, reports in a July 2010 briefing that the Kyrgyz authorities in southern Kyrgyzstan have tortured ethnic Uzbeks detained after the June violence,

“The Kyrgyz authorities should take urgent steps to stop the widespread torture and arbitrary detentions of Uzbeks suspected of participation in the violence that erupted in June in southern Kyrgyzstan, Human Rights Watch said today. These violations undermine the investigation into the events and increase tensions, threatening to further destabilize the situation, Human Rights Watch said.

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¹⁸⁷ Amnesty International, Kyrgyzstan: Partial truth and selective justice: The aftermath of the June 2010 violence in Kyrgyzstan, 16 December 2010, EUR58/022/2010, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR58/022/2010/en/2e04ab9b-73e6-46a1-98d7-563198e7255e/eur580222010en.pdf>, accessed 20 December 2010

¹⁸⁸ Refugees International, Island of democracy becoming an island of anarchy, 15 July 2010, <http://www.refugeesinternational.org/press-room/oped/island-democracy-becoming-island-anarchy>, accessed 2 November 2010

¹⁸⁹ Amnesty International, Kyrgyzstan: Partial truth and selective justice: The aftermath of the June 2010 violence in Kyrgyzstan, 16 December 2010, EUR58/022/2010, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR58/022/2010/en/2e04ab9b-73e6-46a1-98d7-563198e7255e/eur580222010en.pdf>, accessed 20 December 2010

Human Rights Watch researchers on the ground in southern Kyrgyzstan have received numerous, credible reports of arbitrary arrests in Uzbek neighborhoods in Osh Province and of severe beatings and other forms of ill-treatment, including torture, in custody. Human Rights Watch documented the death of one man and dozens of injuries as a result of abuse by Kyrgyz security forces.

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Human Rights Watch has received information about ill-treatment, including torture, in more than 30 cases connected to the investigation of the June violence. In six cases, Human Rights Watch researchers were able to interview recently released victims who told Human Rights Watch that they had been severely beaten and subjected to torture such as asphyxiation and burning with cigarette stubs. In other cases Human Rights Watch saw photos of injuries from beatings or obtained testimony from lawyers, family members, and other detainees who saw the victims while they were still in detention.

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Lawyers and relatives told Human Rights Watch that the authorities repeatedly harass them, prevent access to the detainees, and threaten them not to complain about ill-treatment. Human Rights Watch previously documented the denial of due process guarantees and allegations of torture in the case of Azimzhan Askarov, a local human rights defender who is still in detention in the southern town of Bazar-Kurgan.”¹⁹⁰

The July 2010 report by *Human Rights Watch* further notes,

“Human Rights Watch expressed concern about indications that ethnic Uzbeks are disproportionately targeted for detention and warned that continued arbitrary arrests and widespread abuse, including torture, might further destabilize the already tense situation in southern Kyrgyzstan. Agitated by arbitrary arrests, ill-treatment including torture, and altercations between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks, large crowds of Uzbek men and women gathered in the streets on several occasions over the last week to prevent or protest new arrests and the ill-treatment of detainees, sometimes leading to confrontations with local law enforcement officials. On July 10, 2010, the Prosecutor General's Office of Kyrgyzstan issued an order calling on the law enforcement agencies to observe the law scrupulously during the security operations.

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Human Rights Watch has documented a pattern of arrests carried out by the Kyrgyz police and other security forces in the Osh province in southern Kyrgyzstan in violation of international and Kyrgyz law. Dozens of witnesses described daily raids in several Uzbek neighborhoods by groups of armed men in camouflage uniforms, usually driving civilian vehicles. Witnesses in various neighborhoods provided consistent accounts of security forces conducting arbitrary, unsanctioned searches of people's homes without identifying themselves or explaining the reasons for the raid.

In the course of the raids, the security forces usually took into custody several (one to five) men, either claiming that they would be interrogated and released or without providing justification. In many cases the security forces held the relatives, mainly women and children, at gunpoint, threatened to shoot them if they protested the detention, shouted obscenities, and shoved them away. In most cases, the security forces did not tell the relatives where the detainees were taken, and several families said they could not establish the location of their relatives for hours or even days.

Most of the detainees were young men, ages 20 to 30, although Human Rights Watch also documented the detention of elderly parents and other relatives of suspects, women - including at least one who was severely disabled - and minors as young as 14.

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Victims of torture and ill-treatment interviewed by Human Rights Watch said that they had been coerced into implicating themselves or others. Lawyers who had access to detainees

¹⁹⁰ HRW, Kyrgyzstan: Torture, Detentions Escalate Tensions, 14 July 2010, <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/07/13/kyrgyzstan-torture-detentions-escalate-tensions>, accessed 12 November 2010

confirmed to Human Rights Watch the practice of obtaining confessions and testimony by torture and ill-treatment. Human Rights Watch received dozens of reports of police officials demanding substantial bribes from family members (ranging from US\$100 to \$10,000) for the release of detainees.

Five lawyers told Human Rights Watch that the authorities are systematically denying the defendants due process rights, such as the right to have the lawyer of their choice and to consult with a lawyer in private, making it impossible for their clients to complain confidentially to the lawyers about ill-treatment, extortion, and other violations. The lawyers also said that the authorities routinely refused to order medical examinations of detainees in cases of suspected ill-treatment.

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The main methods of ill-treatment used by the interrogators appear to be prolonged, severe beatings with rubber batons or rifle butts, punching, and kicking. Given the severity of the pain inflicted in this manner on detainees, such treatment amounts to torture. In at least two cases, the victims reported being tortured by suffocation with gas masks put on their heads and the flow of air cut off until they lost consciousness. One detainee reported being burned with cigarettes, also a form of torture. In the vast majority of cases, the torture took place within the first 48 hours of detention while the detainees remained in police custody.”¹⁹¹

VOA News notes in an August 2010 the continued intimidation of ethnic Uzbeks in southern Kyrgyzstan,

“Two months after inter-ethnic violence ravaged southern Kyrgyzstan, the Kyrgyz dominated police force continues to detain and torture members of the ethnic Uzbek minority, according to a report released Monday by a leading American human rights group.

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The spokesman for Kyrgyzstan's interim government, Farid Niyazov, was not available in Bishkek Monday to comment on the report. However, Sumar Nasiz, spokesman for the Kyrgyz prosecutor general's office, is quoted by AFP as saying that the government is capable of objectively investigating claims of ethnic violence. Nasiz acknowledged that offenses had been committed by the Kyrgyz security forces, but he denied the genocide or ethnic cleansing of Uzbeks.”¹⁹²

Amnesty International also reported in December 2010 that Uzbeks continued to experience daily harassment post June violence,

“Large scale search-and-sweep operations were replaced by frequent smaller scale security operations once the barricades from the Uzbek neighbourhoods had been removed by the security forces and the curfew had been lifted. Human rights monitors reported that scores of people, mostly Uzbek men, continued to be arbitrarily detained by security forces, often in early-morning raids on tents provided to those whose homes had been destroyed in the mahallas. Others were stopped in the streets or in their cars at checkpoints. Many reported being held incommunicado in police or national security custody, beaten, or otherwise ill-treated and tortured to force them to confess to a crime or to incriminate a relative, a neighbour, an employer or a friend. Relatives and lawyers claimed that on the basis of this information security officers proceeded to detain those incriminated, while extorting money from the families in order to secure the release of their relative, improve their conditions of detention or prevent others from being detained. Relatives were obstructed in their attempts to submit complaints about allegations of torture to police and prosecutors.

¹⁹¹ HRW, Kyrgyzstan: Torture, Detentions Escalate Tensions, 14 July 2010, <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/07/13/kyrgyzstan-torture-detentions-escalate-tensions>, accessed 12 November 2010

¹⁹² VOA, Intimidation of Uzbek Minority Continues in Kyrgyzstan, 16 August 2010, <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/asia/Intimidation-of-Uzbek-Minority-Continues-in-Kyrgyzstan-100805129.html>, accessed 2 November 2010

During this period, law enforcement agencies failed to prevent groups of Kyrgyz civilians, often women, assaulting relatives outside police stations or the prosecutor's offices. These groups of Kyrgyz women⁶⁸ have also assaulted relatives of Uzbek detainees outside detention facilities and Kyrgyz, Uzbek and Russian lawyers defending Uzbek suspects on court premises and inside police compounds, most often in the presence of police officers who did not intervene to stop the assaults. To Amnesty International's knowledge no investigations have been opened into offences committed by these groups of women. The deputy Minister of Internal Affairs told Amnesty International that his officers were instead doing outreach and awareness-raising with these groups to explain that they should not spontaneously demonstrate their grief or express their grievances using violence. Several sources expressed concern that the women's actions were not spontaneous and random as the authorities claimed but appeared to be planned and targeted, and – given that the women knew when certain suspects were being brought to court or the prosecutor's office – that law enforcement officials appeared on occasion to be colluding with them to perpetrate human rights abuses.”¹⁹³

Human Rights Watch states in an August 2010 report that the criminal investigation which has been carried out by the Kyrgyz authorities after the June unrest has resulted in further serious violations of Kyrgyz and international law, including arbitrary arrests and illegal detentions,

“The Kyrgyz authorities have the duty to investigate the acts of violence committed June 10-14 and to bring the perpetrators to justice. But Human Rights Watch found that the criminal investigation has been carried out with serious violations of Kyrgyz and international law, including arbitrary arrests and illegal detentions, abusive “sweep” operations that have resulted in at least two deaths, torture and ill-treatment of detainees during arrest and in custody, denial of due process rights to detainees, and harassment of lawyers and relatives of the suspects.

Human Rights Watch also found that although both ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz were involved in the acts of violence in June, so far the investigation appears to be disproportionately targeting ethnic Uzbeks.”¹⁹⁴

Amnesty International reports in a September 2010 briefing the allegations that Kyrgyz law enforcement officials have participated in acts of ill-treatment and torture since the June 2010 unrest,

“There are consistent and credible reports that during the recent violent events in June 2010 targeting ethnic Uzbeks in southern Kyrgyzstan, which drove thousands of people to flee their homes, the security forces either failed to prevent or colluded in the commission of human rights abuses. Moreover, during subsequent search operations security officers are reported to have carried out arbitrary arrests, subjected detainees to torture or other ill-treatment and denied them access to medical treatment or private meetings with their lawyer.

Amnesty International is particularly alarmed at continuing reports that the authorities have attempted to obstruct the legitimate work of human rights defenders, lawyers and other civil society actors in documenting or otherwise responding to the June events. Many have been subjected to threats, beatings, arbitrary detention, torture or other ill-treatment. Some now face long prison terms in harsh conditions following manifestly unfair trials.”¹⁹⁵

In December 2010 *Amnesty International* reported accounts of arbitrary detentions,

¹⁹³ Amnesty International, Kyrgyzstan: Amnesty International urges Kyrgyzstan to promptly investigate all reports of torture and ill-treatment, 29 September 2010, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR58/016/2010/en/31cae7d0-08d8-48d6-a6d8-793dfd1ce586/eur580162010en.pdf>, accessed 2 November 2010

¹⁹⁴ HRW, “Where is the Justice?”* Interethnic Violence in Southern Kyrgyzstan and its Aftermath, August 2010, <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2010/08/16/where-justice-0>, accessed 12 November 2010

¹⁹⁵ Amnesty International, Kyrgyzstan: Amnesty International urges Kyrgyzstan to promptly investigate all reports of torture and ill-treatment, 29 September 2010, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR58/016/2010/en/31cae7d0-08d8-48d6-a6d8-793dfd1ce586/eur580162010en.pdf>, accessed 2 November 2010

“In the immediate aftermath of the June violence and following the imposition of a curfew between the hours of 20:00 and 06:00 on Osh and Jalal-Abad regions, reports emerged of numerous arbitrary detentions carried out by unidentified armed individuals wearing camouflage. Those detained were taken to offices of law enforcement agencies, where many were reportedly ill-treated. The curfew, which was temporarily lifted for the Constitutional Referendum on 27 June, remained in place until 10 August, the beginning of Ramadan. In a meeting with Amnesty International, in September 2010, the deputy Prosecutor General, accounted for these arrests by saying that more than 2,500 people had been detained for violating the curfew during this period, the vast majority of whom were fined or cautioned and released. However, Amnesty International received numerous reports of persons being detained outside curfew hours or without having violated the curfew. The deputy Prosecutor General further noted that the Interdepartmental Investigative Working Group under his authority had received very few complaints about ill-treatment in detention, none of which were confirmed by investigations conducted by prosecutors and police.”¹⁹⁶

In December 2010 Amnesty International reported that torture and ill-treatment were routine and being carried out with near impunity,

“reports of torture or other ill-treatment in the aftermath of the June violence have been widespread. Beatings by law enforcement officers appeared to continue to be routine, especially in the street during apprehension, during transfer to detention centres, during initial interrogation, or in pre-charge detention facilities. Impunity for such serious human rights violations appears to date to have been almost total. The office of the Prosecutor-General, responsible for the coordination of investigations and prosecutions into the June violence, told Amnesty International in September that it did not have figures regarding complaints of torture and other ill-treatment of detained suspects, but all complaints regarding torture and other ill-treatment were being registered and investigated. By the end of November, however, not a single prosecution for ill-treatment in police custody following the June events appeared to have taken place. According to the deputy prosecutor for Osh region his office had received very few complaints of torture in detention. This contrasts starkly with the allegations of widespread beatings or other ill-treatment of Uzbek detainees raised by human rights organizations and defence lawyers.

For his part, the first deputy Minister of Internal Affairs admitted to Amnesty International in September that there had been isolated cases of torture and ill-treatment of detained Uzbek suspects and that the Ministry had ordered investigations into the most serious of these cases. In some instances, the deputy Minister had conducted investigations personally. For example, the deputy Minister explained that he had gone to interview prominent human rights defender and prisoner of conscience Azimzhan Askarov, who had denied outright any torture or other ill-treatment by police officers when asked directly by the minister. This brief interview in the presence of local police officers constituted the extent of the investigation to date into the torture allegations repeatedly raised by Azimzhan Askarov’s lawyer, in spite of previously documented evidence, including photographs, of injuries sustained whilst in custody. While in detention Azimzhan Askarov consistently denied that he had been ill-treated because his treatment worsened if he spoke out. Since his transfer to a prison detention facility outside Bishkek in November he has given more details about the torture and ill-treatment he was subjected to in police custody in Bazar-Korgan and Jalal-Abad.”¹⁹⁷

A September 2010 report by the *International Partnership for Human Rights* notes the conviction of

¹⁹⁶ Amnesty International, Kyrgyzstan: Amnesty International urges Kyrgyzstan to promptly investigate all reports of torture and ill-treatment, 29 September 2010, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR58/016/2010/en/31cae7d0-08d8-48d6-a6d8-793dfd1ce586/eur580162010en.pdf>, accessed 2 November 2010

¹⁹⁷ Amnesty International, Kyrgyzstan: Amnesty International urges Kyrgyzstan to promptly investigate all reports of torture and ill-treatment, 29 September 2010, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR58/016/2010/en/31cae7d0-08d8-48d6-a6d8-793dfd1ce586/eur580162010en.pdf>, accessed 2 November 2010

a human rights defender on several criminal charges, stating that there are concerns he did not receive a fair trial,

“A court in the Nookan district of the Jalal-Abad region in southern Kyrgyzstan yesterday sentenced Askarov to lifetime imprisonment for his alleged role in violent events that took place in his home settlement Bazar Korgon in June and resulted in the death of a police officer. The court also ordered the confiscation of his property. He was found guilty under numerous articles of the Criminal Code of Kyrgyzstan, including participation in mass disturbances, incitement of ethnic hatred, and complicity in murder.

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There are serious grounds to believe that the charges against Askarov are politically motivated and that he is being punished for his human rights work. Prior to being arrested Askarov was actively engaged in efforts to document looting, arson and violent attacks perpetrated during the inter-ethnic violence that engulfed southern Kyrgyzstan this summer. Among others, he filmed cases when police failed to intervene to stop violent acts. Previously he had been working for several years to monitor and report on prison conditions and police treatment of detainees.

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There are also serious concerns about the fairness of the trial against Askarov and seven other individuals who were tried together with him and likewise given lengthy prison sentences. The defense lawyers were reportedly denied the opportunity to submit petitions or question witnesses.

Moreover, the hearings were conducted in an openly hateful atmosphere, where relatives of the dead policeman shouted anti-Uzbek slurs and demands for execution against the defendants, and intimidated and attacked their lawyers and family members without an adequate response from the side of court officials or police present. At one hearing, Askarov and several other defendants showed visible signs of having been beaten, which reinforced earlier concerns that Askarov may have been subjected to torture in detention.”¹⁹⁸

An October 2010 report by *IRIN News* comments on the concerns of lawyers in southern Kyrgyzstan with regard to security and due process rights in court cases linked to inter-ethnic clashes in June,

“A group of lawyers are demanding that the Kyrgyz authorities guarantee security and due process in court cases linked to inter-ethnic clashes earlier this year, to prevent the chaos and violence that has disrupted some of the hearings so far. “We declared that we will not take part in proceedings until there is adequate security,” Nazgul Suiunbaeva, one of 161 members of the lawyers’ group that issued the statement, told IRIN. She related her own experience of being threatened, punched and hit on the head with a metal object by the widow of a murder victim, then pelted with stones, when defending her client in the southern city of Osh on 14 October.

The attacks, and reports of widespread abuses by police and other officials involved with pre-trial investigations, raise questions over the country's justice system and its ability to ensure genuine accountability, particularly in the south, where mistrust and hostility still divide the local Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities. “All the defendants are scared. The trial lawyers are scared. What kind of justice can there be?” said Tayir Asanov, another of the lawyers told IRIN.

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Asanov, defending a man accused of killing the driver of a murdered police chief, said he was accosted on 29 September by “infuriated women” who chased him out of the courtroom after he called for an inquiry into allegations that his client had been beaten in custody. He said court officials did not intervene. As in most of the cases that have sparked violence, the

¹⁹⁸ IPHR, Kyrgyzstan: Appeal to the international community - call for a new, fair review of the case of human rights defender Azimzhan Askarov, 16 September 2010, <http://iphronline.org/news.html?32>, accessed 2 November 2010

defendant was ethnic Uzbek, while the assailants were from the majority Kyrgyz community.

The Prosecutor General's Office, which oversees the task force investigating the June clashes, told IRIN that all necessary security measures were being taken and that an investigation had shown Asanov's client had not been beaten. A senior official, who asked not to be identified, called the attack on Asanov "a verbal quarrel" and said there had been only one instance, on 13 October, of physical violence connected to the trials. "This was the first time a beating was registered," said the official. "There's no need to make a big to-do about it."

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Two other attacks on 11-12 October, and a widely reported melee at a September hearing against human rights activist Azimjon Askarov, have also been documented.

Suiunbaeva said the assailants "don't understand that trial lawyers are doing their job... They think we skew the facts. They call me a traitor, because I'm ethnic Kyrgyz. The attitude toward trial lawyers - it's as if we killed their relatives."

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However, potential ethnic bias is just one part of the problem of Kyrgyzstan's dysfunctional justice system, which suffers from under-qualified investigators and allegedly malleable judges. An International Crisis Group report two years ago described the court system's failure to act as "a neutral arbiter", and highlighted the need for "significant reform to gain the trust of the public and to assert its role as an independent branch of government".¹⁹⁹

The *Jamestown Foundation* expresses concerns regarding defendants due process rights in criminal trials following the June unrest in a November 2010 article,

"Approximately six months after the ethnic violence in Osh and Jalalabad, southern Kyrgyzstan remains relatively calm. Tensions, however, have now migrated into the local courtrooms, where the alleged criminals are on trial in a highly charge environment. Ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks find themselves on the opposite sides of the courtroom, each identifying themselves as a victim of the June violence.

The aftermath of the four-day violence in June has revealed some of the worst traits of Kyrgyzstan's judicial system and the underlying problems of the Kyrgyz police force. Overall, roughly 300 cases related to the June violence have been instigated, but only a selected number of them have reached the courts. The vast majority of the cases are stalled for various reasons – primarily because defendants, witnesses, and lawyers' security are jeopardized and fearing further instability local judges refrain from taking responsibility over potentially explosive cases. On October 29, five ethnic Uzbek men were sentenced to life in prison for complicity in killing a policeman and his driver, both ethnic Kyrgyz, during the June violence. Like other similar cases, this trial was postponed several times because of courtroom violence.

Both the victims of violence and defendants do not trust the courts and seek to take justice into their own hands. There have been several cases where defendants and their relatives, ethnic Uzbeks, were attacked by the victim party, ethnic Kyrgyz. In one incident on October 13 in Osh court, the police, consisting mostly of ethnic Kyrgyz, was reluctant to defend ethnic Uzbek victims of attacks. Two Uzbek men were severely beaten and a woman was punched in the face.

The case of Azimjan Askarov, an ethnic Uzbek rights activist, is perhaps a revealing example of the dysfunctional judicial system in Kyrgyzstan. Askarov was detained on June 15 for allegedly inciting inter-ethnic and religious hatred. Later, however, he was accused of organizing the inter-ethnic clashes and was sentenced to life in prison. According to Askarov's lawyer, Nurbek Toktakunov, during detention Askarov was tortured and denied appropriate legal defense. Toktakunov, an ethnic-Kyrgyz, has received threats from the

¹⁹⁹ IRIN News, Lawyers demand protection, 19 October 2010, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportID=90814>, accessed 18 November 2010

affected party for defending an Uzbek.”²⁰⁰

Amnesty International reported in December 2010 that some defendants have been denied the right to a fair trial,

“Trials of Uzbek suspects charged with murder and other crimes in relation to the June violence have been seriously flawed. The trial of human rights defender Azimzhan Askarov and seven co-defendants accused of the murder of a Kyrgyz police officer during violence in Bazar-Korgan is representative of the failure of the authorities to guarantee fair trial rights to all defendants, regardless of their ethnic origin, in line with their international human rights commitments.

The trial took place between 2 and 15 September in Nookan and was itself marred by repeated acts of violence against Azimzhan Askarov’s family and lawyers both inside and outside the courtroom. Court officials, including the judge, reportedly intervened only sporadically to stop the violence and restore order.

Human rights activists monitoring the trial reported that relatives of the accused were not given access to the courtroom, apparently because there was no room. However, relatives of the police officer who was killed as well as scores of plainclothes and uniformed police officers were allowed in. Relatives of the dead officer threatened and attacked the defendants’ lawyers in court hitting them with sticks and throwing a glass at them. The glass smashed against the bars of the cage holding the defendants, and splinters hit one of the lawyers.

The defendants’ lawyers were not given the opportunity to question witnesses or submit petitions, nor able to call defence witnesses as the authorities were not able to guarantee their safety. When the lawyers expressed concern that they would not be able to defend their clients under these conditions the judge reportedly threatened to have their licences to practice revoked. The defendants denied their guilt and maintained in court that they had been forced to confess under duress. Their allegations were not investigated and five of them, including Azimzhan Askarov were sentenced to life imprisonment. Although security was increased both inside and outside the courtroom during the subsequent appeal hearings, the Jalal-Abad regional court did not examine any of the allegations of forced confessions by the defendants or order an investigation into these allegations. Defence lawyers were not able to call witnesses and relatives and colleagues of the murdered police officers continued to threaten the lawyers. The appeal court upheld the sentences imposed by the court of first instance.”²⁰¹

Amnesty International further report that lawyers were not given regular or private access to clients,

“In a separate case 14 ethnic Uzbek men were sentenced on 30 October to life imprisonment

after being convicted of killing 16 people, including ethnic Kyrgyz civilians and law enforcement officers, on 13 and 14 June in the so-called SANPA case, when violence broke out near a cotton factory of that name in the southern region of Suzak. The trial began on 30 September in the town of Nookan, in the Jalal-Abad region. However, it was postponed until 14 October after the families of the “SANPA” victims reportedly beat some of the relatives of the defendants and one of the lawyers provided by the independent human rights NGO Spravedlivost (Justice) during the court hearing. According to the lawyers provided by Spravedlivost their defendants had been tortured in police custody to

²⁰⁰ The Jamestown Foundation, No Justice Following Ethnic Violence in Kyrgyzstan, 2 November 2010, [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=37120&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=27&cHash=843a4ae4c8](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=37120&tx_ttnews[backPid]=27&cHash=843a4ae4c8), accessed 12 November 2010

²⁰¹ Amnesty International, Kyrgyzstan: Amnesty International urges Kyrgyzstan to promptly investigate all reports of torture and ill-treatment, 29 September 2010, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR58/016/2010/en/31cae7d0-08d8-48d6-a6d8-793dfd1ce586/eur580162010en.pdf>, accessed 2 November 2010

confess to the killings. However, the presiding judge refused to take into consideration these torture allegations and order an investigation. Again, witnesses for the defence could not be called out of fear for their safety. Prior to the trial defence lawyers were not given regular and private access to their clients held in police custody.”²⁰²

In December 2010 *Amnesty International* reported that consideration should be given as to whether crimes against humanity were committed,

“Amnesty International believes that the evidence currently available of the June violence in southern Kyrgyzstan may meet the requirements of crimes against humanity. Such a determination would require further investigation. The scale of the June violence, its geographic extent, and the large number of civilian victims who were targeted demonstrate its widespread nature. It is not in question that serious crimes, including those potentially constituting crimes against humanity – such as murder and sexual violence – took place. The violence may also, at least in part, have been systematic, and may have amounted to an attack directed against a civilian population. In short, the nature of the June violence is such that crimes against humanity may have been committed in the course of it.”²⁰³

In December 2010 *Amnesty International* reported that lawyers and human rights defenders had been harassed,

“There have been several reports of the authorities having attempted to obstruct the legitimate work of human rights defenders, lawyers and other civil society actors in documenting the June events, including attempts to confiscate evidence and documentation.

In a climate of mutual blame and growing nationalist discourse, human rights defenders find themselves in the difficult position of having to justify their work to both ethnic communities. Uzbek human rights defenders and lawyers are particularly at risk of violence and have been threatened, beaten, in some cases detained and tortured and in the case of Azimzhan Askarov sentenced to life imprisonment after a blatantly unfair trial. Their Kyrgyz colleagues and those of other ethnic origins, have also come under increasing pressure and several have been threatened and assaulted by Kyrgyz civilians for defending the rights of Uzbek suspects.

Law enforcement officers who were present during these assaults or were called to assist the victims regularly failed to intervene. For example, Uzbek human rights defender and lawyer Abdumanob Khanapov was assaulted and beaten by a group of women inside the building of Osh regional court when he tried to submit a complaint about arbitrary detention and ill-treatment in police custody to the court. He said that the women identified him as Uzbek and beat him for several minutes. He called for help but none of the police officers or court officials present intervened. He had to seek medical help for the injuries sustained. He reports that to date his complaints have not been investigated.

In another case related to the June violence, lawyer Tair Asanov was attacked in court after calling for an investigation into police ill-treatment against his client and nine other men during their trial in Osh, southern Kyrgyzstan. Tair Asanov’s client was accused with nine other men of charges ranging from involvement in the death of the Kara Suu District Police Chief and his driver, to taking part in riots. After he requested an investigation into the beatings, Tair Asanov describes how the relatives of the murdered police chief present in the courtroom shouted insults at him and attacked him. After the hearing ended, relatives

²⁰² Amnesty International, Kyrgyzstan: Partial truth and selective justice: The aftermath of the June 2010 violence in Kyrgyzstan, 16 December 2010, EUR58/022/2010, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR58/022/2010/en/2e04ab9b-73e6-46a1-98d7-563198e7255e/eur580222010en.pdf>, accessed 20 December 2010

²⁰³ Amnesty International, Kyrgyzstan: Partial truth and selective justice: The aftermath of the June 2010 violence in Kyrgyzstan, 16 December 2010, EUR58/022/2010, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR58/022/2010/en/2e04ab9b-73e6-46a1-98d7-563198e7255e/eur580222010en.pdf>, accessed 20 December 2010

followed Tair Asanov outside the courtroom and attacked him again, beating him for about 10 minutes. Police were present while he was being beaten but did not intervene.

Tatiana Tomina, an ethnic Russian lawyer, has repeatedly been targeted by groups of Kyrgyz civilians and relatives of victims. She has been physically assaulted outside police stations and prosecution offices as well as inside court buildings, including in court rooms during hearings. She has been the object of numerous racial insults and has received frequent death threats.”²⁰⁴

In December 2010 *Amnesty International* reported ethnic bias in the investigation of crimes committed during the June violence,

“Prosecution authorities have refused to disclose information about the number of alleged perpetrators involved in the more than 5,000 criminal cases opened and details of their ethnic origin. The Deputy Prosecutor General told Amnesty International that “criminals have no ethnicity for us”. Although refusing to provide an ethnic breakdown of the alleged perpetrators of crimes committed during the June violence, the deputy Prosecutor General told Amnesty International that the criminal cases opened against ethnic Uzbeks outnumbered the criminal cases opened against ethnic Kyrgyz, at least with respect to the most serious charges.”²⁰⁵

On 15 July the National Commission for the comprehensive study of the causes, consequences and the production of recommendations on the tragic events that occurred in the South of the Republic in June 2010 was established by decree of the President. The Commission is due to submit its report by the end of January 2011.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Amnesty International, Kyrgyzstan: Partial truth and selective justice: The aftermath of the June 2010 violence in Kyrgyzstan, 16 December 2010, EUR58/022/2010, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR58/022/2010/en/2e04ab9b-73e6-46a1-98d7-563198e7255e/eur580222010en.pdf>, accessed 20 December 2010

²⁰⁵ Amnesty International, Kyrgyzstan: Partial truth and selective justice: The aftermath of the June 2010 violence in Kyrgyzstan, 16 December 2010, EUR58/022/2010, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR58/022/2010/en/2e04ab9b-73e6-46a1-98d7-563198e7255e/eur580222010en.pdf>, accessed 20 December 2010

²⁰⁶ Amnesty International, Kyrgyzstan: Partial truth and selective justice: The aftermath of the June 2010 violence in Kyrgyzstan, 16 December 2010, EUR58/022/2010, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR58/022/2010/en/2e04ab9b-73e6-46a1-98d7-563198e7255e/eur580222010en.pdf>, accessed 20 December 2010; Zamandash Press, Special National Commission will investigate tragic events happened in the south of Kyrgyzstan, 15 July 2010, http://www.eng.zpress.kg/news/news_only/3/4688.py, accessed 12 November 2010; J. J. Satybaldiev Vice Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic, General Director, State Directorate on Rehabilitation and Development of Osh and Jalal-Abad Cities at the High-Level Donors Meeting “EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC: RECONCILIATION AND RECOVERY”, July 27, 2010, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/ECAEXT/Resources/258598-1281024128923/Speech_Satybaldiev_ENG.pdf, accessed 12 November 2010