



OPEN DIALOGUE

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Statement of the Open Dialogue Foundation on the working SESSION I: Challenges to Realizing Tolerance and Non-Discrimination and the Impact of Compound Crises

Within the years the Open Dialogue Foundation conducts monitoring of human rights situation in post-Soviet states. Today I would like to draw your attention to the situation of ethnic minorities in Kazakhstan, where the violations of human rights are systematic. The Kazakhstani officials claim absence of any ethnic discrimination, but our observations say that the reality is completely opposite.

In February 2020 there was an ethnic conflict in Korday district of Jambyl Oblast in Southern Kazakhstan. This is a place of compact settlements of the Dungan minority. In the result of ethnic pogrom 11 people were killed, more than 180 were injured. Thousands of Dungans fled to neighboring Kyrgyzstan.

It is important to underline that the police and security service did not prevent and hold the pogrom participants back. It is hard to believe that the Committee of National Security did not notice 1000 armed people in the country where every citizen's step is registered by Hikvision cameras. The investigation of this incident lacks transparency. The authorities forced local people to keep quiet. In the affected settlements the police conducted searches and interrogations of the Dungans. Some of them were tortured to get their confessions. Such interrogations were conducted without lawyers and lasted 12-14 hours in a row.

The authorities of Kazakhstan refuse to recognize the fact of ethnic conflict in Korday district trying to simplify it as criminal. The human rights defenders who support the Dungans were persecuted by the government.

Another ethnic groups which are victims of discrimination by Kazakhstani authorities are Uyghurs and ethnic Kazakhs from Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China. The Kazakhstani government denies asylum for those who are suffering in so-called "re-education camps". Law enforcement initiate criminal cases for "illegal crossing of the border" against Uyghurs and forward them back to China, where they face very serious human rights violations.

In January 2020 ethnic Kazakhs from China Murager Alimuly and Kaster Musakhanuly were sentenced to 1 year prison for illegally crossing the border. Their asylum requests are still pending.

To conclude, the Open Dialogue Foundation raises attention to ethnic discrimination in Kazakhstan in the level of state. We demand the authorities of Kazakhstan to stop persecution of Dungans, Uyghurs and ethnic Kazakhs from China. We urge the OSCE for a strong reaction and support for the suffering ethnic minorities in Kazakhstan. The independent investigation of pogrom of Dungans and the role of the government in ethnic conflict in Korday district is needed. The ethnic discrimination in Kazakhstan should be addressed with the available international legal mechanisms.

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