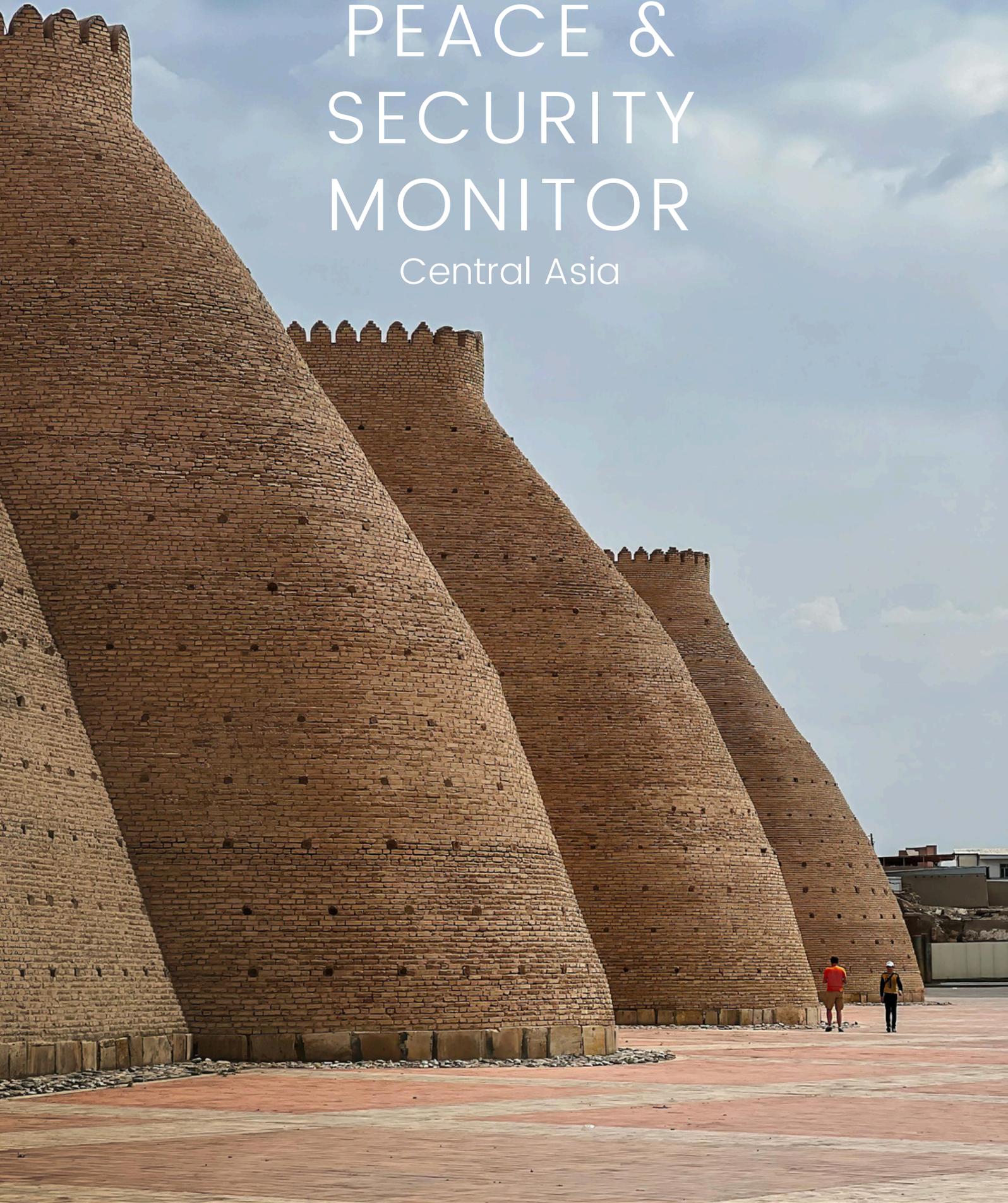


THE
PEACE &
SECURITY
MONITOR
Central Asia



All rights reserved

© Platform for Peace and Humanity, 2024

Cover Photo: Walls of Ark of Bukhara, Bukhara, Uzbekistan. Alexander Popovkin

ISSN 2989-3038

Project Coordinator

Fadhilah Gubari

Editor

Kelly Demjanick
Fadhilah Gubari

Authors

Tuck Kei Yong
Lova Jansson
Natalia Arkhipova
Saher Husain
Anvar Kodirov
Tara Matthews



Central Asia**Issue 8****June 2024****Table of contents**

Breaking the Cycle: Liberating Child Soldiers in Afghanistan.....	5
<i>Tuck Kei Yong</i>	
Central Asian Labour Migration: Issues, Opportunities, and the Imperative of Government Action.....	13
<i>Lova Jansson</i>	
Addressing Domestic Violence in Kazakhstan: Challenges, Progress, and the Path Forward.....	20
<i>Natalia Arkhipova</i>	
Exploring Cultural Factors and Legal Gaps Contributing to Femicide in Kyrgyzstan: A Comprehensive Analysis.....	27
<i>Saher Husain</i>	
Evolving Russia-Uzbekistan Relations Amidst Uzbek Labour Migrants Challenges.....	35
<i>Anvar Kodirov</i>	
Tajikistan's Fight Against Terrorism as a Justification for National and Transnational Repression.....	42
<i>Tara Matthews</i>	



Central Asia

Issue 8

June 2024

Foreword

A plethora of issues are shaping the landscape of peace and security across Central Asia—many challenges arising from deeply rooted societal issues and complex regional and international dynamics.

The child soldiers in the devastated country of Afghanistan not only violate the children's rights but also challenge the efforts that could pave the way for lasting peace. Unstabilising society and the distribution of human development keep widening the scars of conflict.

Moreover, labour migration within Central Asia without the cover of proper governmental policies endangers migrant rights and prevents opportunities to harness migrations for regional stability and growth.

The legal bias in Kazakhstan is preventing the fight against gender-based violence and domestic violence which is preventing achieving equal citizenship and a more harmonious community. Similarly, the femicide of women in Kyrgyzstan is alarming more than ever yet as the regime is tightening the civic space, advocacy efforts are the torch in the darkness of legal ignorance.

The political dynamics in the region and the Ukraine war are motivating Russia to tighten its relationships in the region, which poses the question of will a country like Uzbekistan one of the main labour providers to Russia can negotiate better deals with Uzbek labour migrants.

Lastly, we scrutinise Tajikistan's counterterrorism measures, considering the balance between national security and potential repression. This exploration is essential for discerning genuine security efforts from those that may infringe on human rights.

The articles in this edition provide a holistic view of the regional efforts towards achieving peace, security, and social justice in Central Asia.



Breaking the Cycle: Liberating Child Soldiers in Afghanistan

Tuck Kei Yong

Key Takeaways

- Despite its illegality, the military recruitment of children in Afghanistan has increased since the Taliban takeover. Existing data on verified child recruitment cases over the years seems to signal an exponential growth of the violation, with no prospect of slowing down in 2024.
- The freezing of Afghan reserves and aid, coupled with the fallout from years of natural disasters, has placed great strain on the Afghan economy, leading to the near collapse of the Afghan financial system, mass unemployment and poverty. The imposition of discriminatory domestic laws and policies against Afghan women further increases the vulnerability of children and their likelihood of enlisting in their local armed groups. These events have the unintended consequences of exacerbating children's already vulnerable situation.
- The Taliban de facto government and the international community are not in coordination to address the ongoing humanitarian and human rights crises in Afghanistan.

Entrapped by Desperation: The Plight of Child Soldiers

International law, through its various international treaties, [1] cases, [2] and customs, [3] prohibits the use and recruitment of children under the age of 18 in armed conflicts. Despite being bound by international law to follow suit, [4] the tragic phenomenon of



Figure 1: Children in Afghanistan (NATO Association of Canada, 2019)

child recruitment remains a common trend among the armed forces and various opposing armed groups in Afghanistan. This article notes that trend, however, seems to be increasing at an alarming rate. From 2021 to 2022, both the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the United Nations Children's Fund verified that recruitment and the use of children in the region amounted to 257 children. [5] In 2023 alone, there were 342 verified cases of child recruitment. [6] Most of them carry out combative roles such as planting IEDs, conducting suicide attacks, spying, and even acting as human shields. [7] Given the trend from 2021 to 2023, we can expect a confirmed increase in child recruitment in 2024 in the next UN Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict.

Whilst the Afghan government has previously taken rudimentary measures to address this issue, such as the issuance of decrees prohibiting future recruitment and the establishment of a Reform Commission to demobilise existing child soldiers, [8] these measures remain ineffectual given that Afghan

societies define children not by their age, but by whether they have manifested pubescent attributes, thereby inadvertently bypassing their international legal obligation to not recruit anyone under the age of 18. [9] Additionally, the collapse of the Afghan economy as a direct result of the World Bank freezing aid disbursements, coupled with prolonged natural disasters, and an escalating armed conflict between the Taliban armed forces and opposing armed groups, have left Afghan families with little to no purchasing power and savings. [10] Food insecurity and poverty are at an all-time high, with an estimated 5 million children under the age of 5 suffering some form of malnutrition in 2024. [11] As of now, 85% of the Afghan population makes do with only 1 USD a day. [12]

Fundamentally, the recruitment of child soldiers thrives on a foundation of desperation. Many children, grappling with poverty and hunger, find themselves ensnared by the promises of militant groups. [13] Against their harsh realities of survival, children often see joining armed factions as the only means to secure food and financial support for their families. [14] Tragically, the cycle perpetuates itself through generations as poverty begets recruitment, and recruitment perpetuates conflict.

Breaking Chains, Building Futures: Economic Empowerment for Children



Figure 2: Impoverished Children that were once recruited by the Taliban (Hindustan Times, 2017)

To effectively deter generations of child soldiers from military service, we must recognize that merely demobilising them from the immediate dangers of conflict is insufficient; instead, we must address the underlying socio-economic factors that often drive their recruitment and perpetuate cycles of violence.

Often, various aggravating factors exist in tangent to persuade children to take up arms, which includes the presence of armed conflicts, lack of access to education, impoverishment, famine, family circumstances, and limited employment opportunities. [15] A destitute child, whose family has perished and has received little to no education, may have no choice but to join any military forces for income, food, shelter, and protection. A poverty-stricken family may even encourage their children to enlist as soldiers to contribute to the financial needs of their household. [16] With the prolonged nature of armed conflicts in Afghanistan normalising violence and warfare, Afghan societies often associate these militant groups as the only means to safety and security, thus further encouraging children to enlist. [17] Once the children enlist, however, whether on their own accord or compelled under extenuating circumstances, Afghan children are automatically placed in madrasas to be subjected to years of religious indoctrination and military training, [18] with no possibility of leaving. [19]

Conversely, it must also be acknowledged that the militant groups' demand for child soldiers in Afghanistan is unlikely to diminish in the foreseeable future. Armed forces and groups across the globe often consider children to be more easily manipulated, coerced, and controlled than their adult counterparts since child soldiers require fewer overall resources to maintain and train. With a low population median age and ongoing armed conflicts between competing factions in Afghanistan, [20] children will continue to be the most accessible demographic for militant groups like the Taliban and ISIS-K to replenish their ranks. [21]

Noting the above, the international community should not merely address child soldiering issues by demanding legal compliance from its recruiters. Whilst the law is clear on the legality of recruiting underage persons in hostilities, solely relying on global condemnation and provocation of these militant groups often yields little results.



Figure 3: A child soldier being closely monitored by its recruiters (HRW, 2021)

This is because, as previously mentioned, militant groups perceive children as a cheap but necessary commodity in their military engagement. Even with losses, an armed group that is desperate and sufficiently adaptable will continue to recruit children amidst its ranks or worse, further increase their recruitment intake to recuperate any perceived losses. This was exactly the case in Afghanistan in 2015. [22] Despite the UN's reaffirmed commitment to impose economic sanctions on the Taliban, child recruitment not only prevailed but even proliferated. [23]

Thus, since the demand for child soldiers remains relatively inelastic, international efforts must be directed to address its supply- the children themselves. This requires a comprehensive approach that focuses on children's economic empowerment, education, and community engagement that addresses the root causes of their vulnerability, which may include poverty, lack of access to education, and more.

These initiatives should also be tailored to children's demographic features, primarily age and gender, since experiences of every child differ. Adolescents tend to think of their prospects in future employment more than those in early-to-middle childhood. [24] Young girls tend to have less opportunities to receive a formal education than their male counterparts. Therefore, depending on the target demographic and the vulnerability root causes the initiatives are targeting, [25] the initiatives range from providing technical training and vocational education to imposing legal protection and childcare centres. [26]



Figure 4: Women in Afghanistan amid a "gender apartheid" (Atlantic Council, 2024)

Empowering Mothers, Nurturing Communities: Support for Female Heads of Household

It is no secret that parents, both the father and the mother, serve as a 'fundamental group in society' in ensuring their children's 'full and harmonious development'. [27] Incorrect family expectations and loss of household income can frequently drive parents to demand their children to join an armed group, in hopes that the children are either fed or given an income to be remitted back to the struggling households. [28] Worse, in the context of young girls, a financially strained family might sell off their daughters to individual armed fighters for an agreed bride price. [29]

By providing targeted support, such as cash-for-work incentives, microfinance opportunities, and skills training programs, women would have the tools to secure additional incomes for the household and actively contribute to their children's well-being. [34] These initiatives not only alleviate immediate financial hardships within the household but also cultivate long-term economic independence, fostering a sense of agency among marginalised women. Furthermore, reversing the Taliban-imposed legal framework and enacting policies that ensure equal access to employment, education, and other equally vital resources are essential steps toward creating an enabling environment for women to thrive economically and socially. [35] Ultimately, the steps taken to foster the economic independence of Afghan women will not only benefit all women, but also have a trickle-down effect on providing children with an alternative to being servicemen.

Rebuilding Prosperity Together: Economic Recovery and Development

Prioritising children and women in our initiative to eliminate child recruitment in Afghanistan is no easy task; in fact, aside from relying on international organisations and NGOs, the real challenge is to get the Taliban de facto government on board with many of the global



Figure 5: Impoverished parents are desperate to take care of their children, leading them to make desperate measures to sell off one child to save the others (AP Photos, 2021)

initiatives. To instigate meaningful change, all parties must prioritise the empowerment of mothers, especially those who head households that have been left ravaged by conflict. [33]

All of this illustrates how children stemming from volatile family circumstances, such as poverty and mistreatment, are susceptible to military recruitment.

In Afghanistan's patriarchal society, however, many Afghan women face profound marginalisation and disempowerment, exacerbated by the socio-political turbulence and economic instability plaguing the nation. As caregivers and household managers, Afghan mothers not only nurture their children, but directly affects their children's lives. [30] Despite their pivotal roles, women are subjected to many restrictions, such as their limited access to education, employment, public participation, mobility, and legal protections.

Since the Taliban takeover in 2021, the de facto government has reversed many of the previous administration's progress on women's rights. [31] Now, Afghan women cannot go to school or university, cannot work, and are even barred from many public places. [32] The sudden ban of women, especially mothers, from their public and economic participation will continue to aggravate the existing financial insecurity within the households, thereby increasing the likelihood of their children enlisting.

As of now, the Afghan government has repeatedly violated their international obligations to protect human rights and practise inclusive governance. The issue here lies in the politicisation of the Afghan economy within the international community. On one hand, the Taliban has refused to partake in any international discussion on the ongoing humanitarian and human rights crises, unless they are formally recognized by other nation

states. [36] On the other, Western states have refused to recognise the Taliban as the de jure Afghan government; [37] instead, has opted to sever all international aid to Afghanistan, thereby crippling the Afghan economy. Since 2021, global financial institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have cut off the Afghan central bank's access to its international resources, essentially crippling the local economy and the livelihood of its people. In response, the Afghan government has also made clear the removal of any obstacle to the international flow of funds as a prerequisite for international cooperation. [38]

Consequently, the financial fallout as a result of the deadlock between the Afghan government and the Western world has mostly impacted the women and children in Afghanistan. [39] With a drastic decrease in economic opportunities in the domestic labour market, followed by natural disasters limiting food yield, children are increasingly left hungry, penniless and susceptible to military recruitment. [40] Thus, it cannot be stressed enough that economic recovery and development are not just desirable outcomes but imperative for breaking the vicious cycle of violence and deprivation that plagues the nation.

Both the Taliban and the international community, alongside global financial institutions and other regional partners must actively front initiatives aimed at revitalising Afghanistan's economy and laying the groundwork for sustainable progress. [41]

This entails not only injecting much-needed capital into infrastructure projects but also facilitating investments in critical sectors, rebuilding infrastructures, and nurturing a culture of economic adaptability. [42] Moreover, by prioritising the development of essential sectors such as agriculture, Afghanistan can harness its vast agricultural potential to drive economic growth and alleviate famine and poverty. [43]



Figure 6: Prior to the collapse of the Afghan banking system, members of Taliban security forces stand guard as crowds of people walk past in front of a money exchange market in Kabul, Afghanistan (Reuters, 2021)

Furthermore, unlocking the entrepreneurial spirit of Afghan citizens, particularly youth and women, is essential to foster long-term economic stability and prosperity. [44] This is achievable by providing targeted support and resources to aspiring entrepreneurs and removing unnecessary barriers. [45]

In essence, by prioritising economic recovery and development, we can pave the way for a brighter future for Afghan children, one characterised by stability, opportunity, and shared prosperity for all.

Conclusion

The liberation of generations of child soldiers in Afghanistan demands a multifaceted approach that addresses the root causes of their recruitment. By providing alternative pathways to economic independence, empowering mothers as agents of change, and revitalising the economy, we can break the cycle of conflict and pave the way for a brighter future. Despite being a journey fraught with challenges, together, we can ensure that no children will ever be on the frontlines.

Recommendations to Safeguard Against Child Recruitment in Afghanistan

- Taliban's involvement is key. [46] For peacebuilding initiatives to succeed, the widest possible range of actors must be involved, which includes its government. This directly affects the coverage and effectiveness of initiatives and the security in their implementation. Thus, notwithstanding the issue of recognition and legitimacy, all nations and international organisations must find common ground to get the Taliban to discuss their active role in the global initiatives on the ongoing humanitarian and human rights crises. Without the involvement of its de facto government, no projects, present or otherwise, will ever be sustainable or yield tangible results.
- Focus on the children's root cause of vulnerability. [47] All efforts taken to rid of child recruitment must go beyond securing the legal compliance of its recruiters or merely demobilising existing child soldiers. The only sustainable way to deter children from the military is to ensure that they have an alternative to that.
- Strengthen women's rights. [48] Respecting human dignity, regardless of who they are, is a basic principle of humanity. The Taliban must immediately reverse all its discriminatory laws and policies on women's education, employment and mobility. By ensuring women's rights, children of both existing and future mothers will less likely need to join armed groups.
- Stop weaponising the Afghan economy. The international community must avoid imposing conditional financial restrictions that inequitably affect the most vulnerable demographics. [49] At the very least, more aid and investments should be made to alleviate the needs of all Afghan people and progress towards economic recovery. By framing this as a threat to human dignity and survival, we acknowledge that inequality among Afghans remains a barrier to security in Afghanistan.

[1] Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (adopted 8 June 1977, entry into force 7 December 1978) 1125 UNTS 3 (Protocol I), Article 77 (2); Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (adopted 12 December 1977, entry into force 7 December 1978) 1125 UNTS 609 (Protocol II), Article 4(3)(c); Convention on the Rights of the Child ('CRC') (adopted 20 November 1989, entry into force 2 September 1990), 1577 UNTS 3, Article 38(3); Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict ('CRC Optional Protocol I') (adopted 25 May 2000, entry into force 12 February 2002), A/RES/54/263, Article 2.

[2] The Prosecutor v. Thomas Lubanga Dyilo (Decision on the confirmation of charges), ICC-01/04-01/06-803-tEN, 07 February 2007.

[3] Prosecutor v. Sam Hinga Norman (Decision on Preliminary Motion Based on Lack of Jurisdiction (Child Recruitment)), SCSL-2004-14-AR72(E) (31 May 2004) para.17-20; Henckaerts J-M and Doswald-Beck L, Customary International Humanitarian Law: Volume I: Rules (Cambridge University Press 2005), pg.482-485; UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children Affected by Armed Conflict, 'Working Paper No. 1, The Six Grave Violations Against Children During Armed Conflict: The Legal Foundation' (SRSG/CAAC 2009), p.7-8; UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children Affected by Armed Conflict, 'Working Paper No. 1, The Six Grave Violations Against Children During Armed Conflict: The Legal Foundation (Updated)' (SRSG/CAAC 2013), p.11.

[4] Afghanistan signed and ratified the CRC on 27 Sep 1990 and 28 Mar 1994 respectively; ratified CRC Optional Protocol I on 24 Sep 2003; is party to the ICC Rome Statute, the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the first two Additional Protocols.

[5] UNSC, 'Children and armed conflict in Afghanistan - Report of the Secretary-General' (21 November 2023) UN Doc S/2023/893, para 25.

[6] UNGA-UNSC, 'Children and armed conflict- Report of the Secretary-General' (3 June 2024) UN Doc A/78/842-S/2024/384, para. 16.

[7] European Union Agency for Asylum, 'Country Guidance: Afghanistan Common Analysis and Guidance Note' (EUAA 2022), pg. 98.

[8] UNSC, 'Children and armed conflict in Afghanistan - Report of the Secretary-General' (21 November 2023) UN Doc S/2023/893, para 56.

[9] Ibid, para. 68; Lignier A, 'Afghanistan: A dire situation for children due to a lack of access to basic services and increased vulnerabilities.' (SRSG/CAAC, 22 December 2023) <<https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/2023/12/afghanistan-a-dire-situation-for-children-due-to-a-lack-of-access-to-basic-services-and-increased-vulnerabilities/>> accessed 1 June 2024

[10] Human Rights Watch, 'Economic Causes of Afghanistan's Humanitarian Crisis' (HRW, 4 August 2022) <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/08/04/economic-causes-afghanistans-humanitarian-crisis>> accessed 1 June 2024.

[11] UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2024' (OCHA, 23 Dec 2023), pg. 49.

[12] UNDP, 'Approximately 85 percent of Afghans live on less than one dollar a day' (UNDP, 10 January 2024) <<https://www.undp.org/stories/approximately-85-percent-afghans-live-less-one-dollar-day#:~:text=%22Approximately%2085%20percent%20of%20Afghans,%22%20%7C%20United%20Nations%20Development%20Programme>> accessed 1 June 2024

[13] Brett R, 'Adolescents Volunteering for Armed Forces or Armed Groups' (2003) 85 International Review of the Red Cross 852, pg. 860-862.

[14] ICRC, Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (ICRC, 2013), pg.1-3.

[15] See note 13.

[16] Qanat GM and others, 'Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers in Afghanistan: Cultural Traits as Pivotal Factor' (2021) 5(2) Journal of Islamic World and Politics 252, pg. 257.

[17] Brett R and Specht I, Young Soldiers, Why They Choose to Fight (1st edn, Lynne Rienne 2004), pg. 11.

[18] Human Rights Watch, 'Afghanistan: Taliban Child Soldier Recruitment Surges' (HRW, 17 February 2016) <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/02/18/afghanistan-taliban-child-soldier-recruitment-surges>>accessed 2 June 2024

[19] See note 17, pg. 128-129.

[20] Giustozzi A, 'The Islamic State in Khorasan between Taliban counter-terrorism and resurgence prospects' (International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 20 Jan 2024) <<https://www.icct.nl/publication/islamic-state-khorasan-between-taliban-counter-terrorism-and-resurgence-prospects>> accessed 2 June 2024.

[21] Rahim N and Mashal M, 'Afghan Army Recruitment Dwindles as Taliban Threaten Families' (New York Times, 18 November 2017) < Afghan Army Recruitment Dwindles as Taliban Threaten Families - The New York Times (nytimes.com)> accessed 2 June 2024

[22] See note 18.

[23] UNSC Res 2160 (17 June 2014) UN Doc S/RES/2160; UNSC Res 2210 (16 March 2015) UN Doc S/RES/2210, para. 15.

[24] See note 13, pg. 861.

[25] ILO, Children formerly associated with armed forces and groups "How-to" guide on economic reintegration (2010), pg. 27-40 (speaks of former child soldiers, but still relevant in their understanding of target demographics)

[26] UNICEF, 'The Paris Principles: Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups' (UNICEF 2007), paras.6.21- 6.35.2.

[27] See note 1 (CRC), preambles.

- [28] World Vision, 'Child soldiers: What You Need to Know' (WVI, 5 February 2021) <<https://www.wvi.org/stories/child-protection/child-soldiers-facts-and-foundations>> accessed 2 June 2024.
- [29] Huang R, 'I'll be sacrificed': The lost and sold daughters of Afghanistan' (Al Jazeera, 14 August 2022) <<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/8/14/ill-be-sacrificed-the-lost-and-sold-daughters-of-afghanistan>> accessed 2 June 2024.
- [30] Alrayis A, 'The Afghan mothers fighting for their daughters' education' (Ideas Beyond Border, 18 July 2022) <<https://ideasbeyondborders.org/afghan-mothers-fighting-for-future/>> accessed 7 June 2023
- [31] Chalabii M, 'Women in Afghanistan: From almost everywhere to almost nowhere' (UN Women, 15 August 2023) <<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2023/08/women-in-afghanistan-from-almost-everywhere-to-almost-nowhere>> accessed 2 June 2024
- [32] Inan F and others, Listening to Women Entrepreneurs in Afghanistan: Their Struggle and Resilience (UNDP 2024), pg. 23-28.
- [33] Ratwatte I, Investing in Afghanistan's Women is more critical than ever (UN Afghanistan, 13 March 2024) <<https://afghanistan.un.org/en/263175-investing-afghanistans-women-more-critical-ever>> accessed 3 June 2024.
- [34] UN Women, 'Rebuilding the women's movement in Afghanistan, one organization at a time' (UNW, 14 May 2024) <<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2024/05/rebuilding-the-womens-movement-in-afghanistan>> accessed 3 June 2024; UNDP, 'Giving Afghan Women a Chance to Grow' (UNDP, 1 March 2023) <<https://www.undp.org/afghanistan/stories/giving-afghan-women-chance-grow>> accessed 3 June 2024
- [35] Al-Nashif N, 'Afghan women suffer extreme discrimination, restrictions and violence - Deputy High Commissioner' (OHCHR 19 June 2023) <<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2023/06/afghan-women-suffer-extreme-discrimination-restrictions-and-violence-deputy-high#:~:text=We%20are%20deeply%20concerned%20by%20the%20overall%20discriminatory,system%20that%20is%20gender-responsive%20and%20accessible%20to%20women.>> accessed 3 June 2024.
- [36] AP News, 'Taliban set unacceptable conditions for attending a UN meeting, says UN secretary-general' (AP News, 20 February 2024) <<https://apnews.com/article/un-afghanistan-taliban-doha-meeting-d5a6fdca4ddeeb205ddb332161a5899c>> accessed 3 June 2024.
- [37] Shelton T, 'The Taliban wants to be recognised by the world. Should Western countries engage with it?' (ABC News, 27 Aug 2021) <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-08-27/should-the-west-engage-with-the-taliban-afghanistan/100393560>> accessed 3 June 2024.
- [38] Muttaqi MAK, 'Afghanistan is ready to work with the US, but sanctions must go' (Al Jazeera, 23 Mar 2023) <<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/3/23/afghanistan-is-ready-to-work-with-the-us-but-sanctions-must-go>> accessed 3 June 2024.
- [39] UN, 'Ten years of Afghan economic growth, reversed in just 12 months: UNDP' (UN, 5 October 2022) <<https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/10/1129287>> accessed 3 June 2024.
- [40] World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update (October 2023): Uncertainty After Fleeting Stability (October 2023), (WB, 3 Oct 2023) pg. 39-47.
- [41] World Bank, Afghanistan to 2030: Priorities for Economic Development Under Fragility (WB, 6 August 2018), pg. 6.
- [42] Ibid, pg. 45-48, 54-58.
- [43] UN Afghanistan, 2022 Afghanistan Annual Results Report (16 April 2023), pg. 15
- [44] Ibid, pg.15-21.
- [45] Ibid, pg. 32.
- [46] UNSC, 'Speakers Weigh Prospects for Engagement with Taliban in Afghanistan amid Ongoing Concern over Harsh Repression of Women's Rights' (2023) <<https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15541.doc.htm>> accessed 15 June 2024.
- [47] OECD, Changing the Odds for Vulnerable Children (OECD, 19 Nov 2019), pg.15-28
- [48] Ibid, pg.107-110, 122-130.
- [49] UNSC, Concerned by Unintended Negative Impact of Sanctions, Speakers in Security Council Urge Action to Better Protect Civilians, Ensure Humanitarian Needs Are Met' (2022) <<https://press.un.org/en/2022/sc14788.doc.htm>> accessed 15 June 2024.

Central Asian Labour Migration: Issues, Opportunities, and the Imperative of Government Action

Lova Jansson

Key takeaways

- Central Asia's reliance on labour migration is extraordinary on a global scale and presents critical income opportunities both at a micro and a macro level.
- It also, however, presents significant risks and issues, including vulnerability to the economic and political climate in Russia and Kazakhstan.
- Many migrants and their families suffer poor living conditions, rights violations, and violence.
- The issue has come to a head for Uzbekistan following a sharp drop in remittances due to the Ruble's depreciation last year, and heightened discrimination and harassment against migrants following the Moscow Crocus City Hall attack in March.
- Tashkent is now strengthening its suite of support initiatives for migrants, but there is more still that the governments in Central Asia and Russia can do.

Central Asian labour migration – background and benefits

Labour migration is a major feature of the Central Asian economies. The migration corridor between sending countries: Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan, and receiving countries: Russia and Kazakhstan are among the busiest globally by population and remittance volumes. To illustrate, as much as

16% of the sending Central Asian nations' economically active population at times lives and works in Russia or Kazakhstan [1]. These migration patterns have been more or less steady throughout the past decade, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine has not decreased Central Asia labour migration to the country [2] [3].

The entrenchment of the migration corridor has clear ties to a number of a social, economic, cultural and geographic conditions, including high unemployment and low productivity in the sending nations, attribute to the weakening of complex economic ties associated with the collapse of the Soviet Union, followed by a number of economic crises and decade-long recession [4][5]. This, combined with a shortage of workers, higher incomes and more diversified economies in the receiving nations, make a recipe for steady migration [6]. The Russian language skills of many Central Asian nationals, cultural similarities, and the strength of transnational social ties and transport connections contribute further [7].

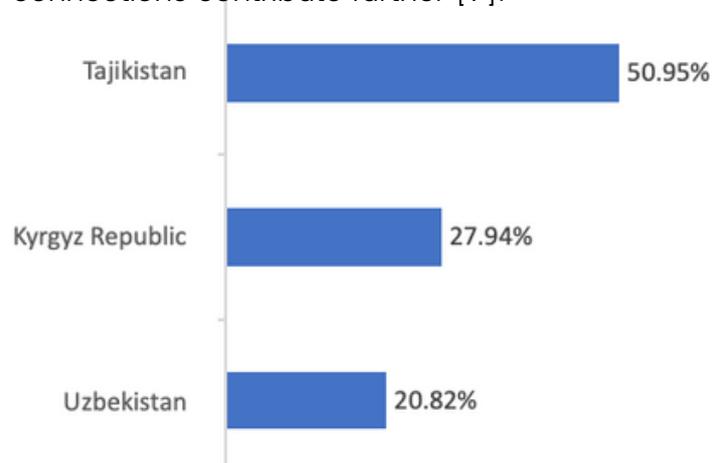


Figure 1: Personal remittances as share of GDP in 2022 (data not available for Turkmenistan). Tajikistan's remittance share of GDP is the greatest in the world, Kyrgyzstan's the third greatest, and Uzbekistan's the 13th greatest. (Source: World Bank World Development Indicators).

For the sending Central Asian countries, labour migration presents a critical avenue to income and development. Migrants access economic and social opportunities that are not at present available at home [8] and their remittances serve to improve living standards and add fuel to local economies through increased consumption and investment [9]. Central Asian households who receive financial support from family members abroad have improved access to food, clothes, medical treatment and education [10][11][12][13] and a study by the National Institute of Strategic Research of Kyrgyz Republic showed a 10% increase in remittances to be associated with a 1.7% decrease in the share of the population in poverty. At the same time, the Central Asian economies and societies' reliance on labour migration presents a number of issues and risks.

Major issues associated with Central Asian labour migration

Economic dependence, tax revenue and social insurance. While a large inflow of remittances has some positive effects on receiving families and nations, it also creates reliance and a vulnerability to fluctuations in the Russian and Kazakh economies. The value of remittances transferred to the Central Asian nations decreased sharply with the devaluation of the Ruble in 2014–15 [14] and the same occurred in 2023 when, for example, Uzbek remittances from Russia dropped by 39% [15]. Beyond the risk of remittance fluctuations, lost tax revenues are a permanent effect of labour outmigration, restraining government investment in much-needed public good and services. Many labour migrants further do not make social insurance contributions either in their home or host country, leaving them and their families exposed. While some provisions are in place to ensure that Russian employers make pension contributions to foreign workers, they do not apply to the majority of seasonal and informal workers [16].

Informality and poor working and living conditions. Data on undocumented migrants and informal workers is inherently difficult to come by, but estimates indicate that there were at least 750,000 undocumented migrants from Central Asian countries in Russia in 2021 – about a third of the total number of migrants [17].

Informality is not something that most Central Asian labour migrants choose, and it is often deleterious to their circumstances. Formality being circumvented by employers is widely observed, as they benefit from the avoidance of social insurance contributions and taxes and from workers' weakened bargaining power. Authorities too, however, play a role in entrenching informality, as officials use migrants as a source of income through extortion [18]. As a result, many Central Asian workers in Russia and Kazakhstan suffer low wages, unsafe working conditions, risks of sudden dismissal, and a lack of benefits and professional development [19][20]. They tend to occupy positions unattractive to the native population, often in low-skill or demanding sectors [21]. And from informal working conditions spring poor living conditions. Housing options are often limited and many migrants sleep at their workplaces or in overcrowded rooms [22].



Figure 2: Many Central Asian labour migrants work in construction, and many have poor working and living conditions. (Image source: Arron Choi on Unsplash, 2019)

Where migrants' children accompany them, their access to education can be compromised [23][24]. Families' broader access to health and justice services also tends to be limited, either because they are denied support or because they avoid reporting to authorities out of fear of reprisal [25].

Gendered impacts of labour migration

Central Asian labour migration also has nuanced gender related impacts. In many cases, women remain at home when their partners migrate, which has created what is known as the 'missing men' phenomenon. In the case of Tajikistan, 83% of migrants are men, exacerbating an already existing gender imbalance due to the civil war in the 90s. One effect is a concern with daughters' prospects of getting married, resulting in agreements to marriage at lower ages [26]. Another consequence is that of divorce when migrants settle permanently abroad, posing a particular issue for women in religious or unregistered marriages who do not benefit from robust property rights and alimony [27]. and for women in traditional communities who often cannot re-marry [28]. At the same time, migration is being increasingly feminised in several Central Asian countries. Female migrants suffer similar challenges as their male counterparts, although their common employment as domestic workers can make them especially vulnerable to informality and invisibility [29].

Violence by host country populations, authorities, employers and intermediaries

Violence toward Central Asian migrants has received renewed attention following the terrorist attack at the Moscow Crocus City Hall in March this year which triggered attacks and harassment, arbitrary arrests, prolonged detention, dismissals from employment, refusal of services, destruction of property, large-scale expulsions and calls for hardened immigration policies [30][31]. Although these developments are deplorable, violence against Central Asian migrants is hardly a new phenomenon in

Russia. Xenophobic attacks and police raids, detentions, extortion and mistreatment have been occurring for decades [32][33] and employer intimidation practices such as the confiscation of workers' IDs and withholding of pay have spurred accusations of forced labour [34].

This is exacerbated by the operations of intermediaries involved in contracting who not only defraud migrants by providing false documents and charging excessive fees, but also blur the link between employers and workers, making it harder to hold the former accountable for rights violations [35].

Uzbekistan's response and further regional action required

Examples of good practices responding to the issues outlined above can be found across Central Asia. Notably, Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev issued a decree in April establishing diplomatic attaches to promote Uzbek labour migration in several non-traditional host countries; enhancing migrants' health insurance, welfare assistance and legal aid abroad; introducing reimbursements for certain qualification exam and visa fees and travel expenses; strengthening social protection for migrants' families; and providing returnees with access to job training and placements [36][37][38]. This is only the latest Uzbek suite of initiatives, with earlier supports including pre-departure trainings; dissemination of information about migrants' rights; consular support; diaspora outreach; and negotiations to facilitate migrants' recruitment [39][40].

Tashkent's recent initiatives serve as good models for its neighbours, although there is more still that the governments of Central Asia ought to do. While the Uzbek government appears to be steering its population away from Russia, the migration corridor between Central Asia and the north is well entrenched and diversion, if possible, will take time [41]. In this context, the Central Asian states would all do well to advocate for

Russia's improved immigration practices and negotiate enhanced working conditions and social security for migrants [42]. Central to this end is Russia's ratification of international legal instruments such as the International Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families [43].

On their own turfs, the Central Asian governments can step up on preparing migrants and their families for departure, and on supporting returns and reintegration. Migrants across the board need more pre-departure information, including on their entitlements while away, without which they are more vulnerable to exploitation and hardship [44][45]. There is further a need to enhance awareness of the importance of registering marriages to avoid destitution among divorcees [46]. Building migrants' vocational and language skills is key to supporting their safety and earnings potential while away, as well as their enhanced contribution to local economies on return [47][48]. This is tied to the broader imperative of development for which Central Asia's strong remittance flows ought to be more strategically channelled [49]. Facilitating the return and reintegration of migrants to support development on the ground, however, is also important, keys to which are the reduction of poverty, inequalities and corruption [50].



Figure3: Tajikistan hosting the first meeting of the Country Coordination Mechanism as part of the Labour Migration Programme in Central Asia which commenced in 2022. Regional fora provide ready mechanisms for Central Asian advocacy for migrants' rights. (Image source: IOM, 2022)

Last but not least, a number of actions are incumbent on the Russian government. Most urgently, following the recent hike of discrimination and harassment toward Central Asian migrants, authorities must stop feeding xenophobia and inciting violence through one-sided, securitising rhetoric [51].

Attacks on migrants must be condemned and accountability for perpetrators ensured. The Russian government is obliged under international law to protect the rights to life and security for all within its borders and should be urgently reminded of this by key international actors, such as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants [52]. The Russian economy and society are heavily reliant on the labour of migrants and the authorities would do better to enhance migrants' reception and integration [53]. This should involve strengthening controls on employers and intermediaries and penalising those who violate migrants' rights, but also, centrally, tackling corruption among government officials [54][55].

Conclusion

Labour migration is both a blessing and a curse to sending countries in Central Asia. While fuelling their economies through large remittance flows, it also makes them dependent on the economic stability and political friendliness of major host countries. At the micro level, many migrants suffer from poor working and living conditions and both episodic and systemic violence, while their families often face lacunae of social protection and services. The response by the Uzbek government in particular is laudable, but actions remain for authorities across the region. Given the prominence of labour migration, protecting migrants and strategically harnessing migration to drive development should be of utmost priority for sending states. Most urgently, the Russian government must prevent violence against and ensure the rights of all Central Asian migrants.

Recommendations

- Russia should take immediate measures to stop episodic and systemic violence toward Central Asian migrants, and instead foster inclusive practices. This includes ratifying the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.
- The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, as well as the ILO and other international actors, should urge and assist Russia in taking these steps.
- The majority sending Central Asian states should advocate for the rights of their citizens in Russia and Kazakhstan. Dedicated regional fora, such as the Central Asia Regional Migration Programme, can be readily leveraged for this.
- Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan also need to harness migration for development, better preparing migrants before departure, strategically channelling remittances, and facilitating return and reintegration.
- The governments of the Central Asian nations should also urgently work to restore girls' human rights by preventing child marriage, and should offer information to women about the risks involved in not registering marriages.

- [1] Ryazantsev, S & Ochirova, G (2019) 'The Impact of Labour Migration on the Sustainable Development of Central Asia', *International Journal of Sciences and Research*, 75(7/10). https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sergey-Ryazantsev/publication/334650864_THE_IMPACT_OF_LABOUR_MIGRATION_ON_THE_SUSTAINABLE_DEVELOPMENT_OF_CENTRAL_ASIA/links/5ea1ff8c92851c87d1b0e1d6/THE-IMPACT-OF-LABOUR-MIGRATION-ON-THE-SUSTAINABLE-DEVELOPMENT-OF-CENTRAL-ASIA.pdf.
- [2] Migration Data Portal (2024, 9 May), 'Migration data in Central Asia', <https://www.migrationdataportal.org/regional-data-overview/central-asia>
- [3] Schenk, C (2023), 'Post-Soviet Labor Migrants in Russia Face New Questions amid War in Ukraine', Migration Policy Institute, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/labor-migrants-russia-ukraine-war>
- [4] Thieme, S (2014) 'Return Migration Coming Home? Patterns and Characteristics of Return Migration in Kyrgyzstan', *International Migration*, 52(5). <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1468-2435.2011.00724.x>
- [5] Abazov, R (2009) 'Current Trends in Migration in the Commonwealth of Independent States', *Human Development Research Paper*, 36, <http://mpr.aub.uni-muenchen.de/19220/>.
- [6] Ryazantsev, S (2016) 'Labour Migration from Central Asia to Russia in the Context of the Economic Crisis', *Russia in Global Affairs*, <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/labour-migration-from-central-asia-to-russia-in-the-context-of-the-economic-crisis/>
- [7] Sagynbekova, L (2017), 'International Labour Migration in the Context of the Eurasian Economic Union: Issues and Challenges of Kyrgyz Migrants in Russia', University of Central Asia – Institute of Public Policy and Administration (IPPA) Working Paper No. 39, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3023259>
- [8] IOM (2024), 'Central Asia Regional Migration Programme', <https://russia.iom.int/central-asia-regional-migration-programme>
- [9] Malyuchenko, I (2015), 'Labour Migration from Central Asia to Russia: Economic and Social Impact on the Societies of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan', OSCE Academy, https://osce-academy.net/upload/file/Policy_Brief_21.pdf
- [10] Doolotov, S (2017), 'The Effect of Remittances on Education in Kyrgyzstan'. Thesis, Department of Economics: Central European University, https://www.etd.ceu.edu/2017/doolotov_sultan.pdf
- [11] Olimova, S (2010), 'The Impact of Labour Migration on Human Capital: The Case of Tajikistan', *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*, 26(3), <https://journals.openedition.org/remi/5239>
- [12] see [6]
- [13] UNICEF (2011), 'Impact of Labour Migration on "Children Left Behind" in Tajikistan'. UNICEF Publication, <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/gdc/gdcovop/2014363276/2014363276.pdf>
- [14] see [1]
- [15] Saida, N (2024, 19 April), 'How Are Patterns of Labor Migration From Uzbekistan Changing?', *The Diplomat*, <https://thediplomat.com/2024/04/how-are-patterns-of-labor-migration-from-uzbekistan-changing/>.
- [16] see [9]
- [17] Ryazantsev, S, Sadvokasova, A & Jeenbaeva, J (2021), 'Study of Labour Migration Dynamics in the Central Asia – Russian Federation Migration Corridor', IOM, https://russia.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11036/files/documents/report_ryazantsev_consolidated_2021_en.pdf
- [18] Round, J & Kuznetsova, I (2021), 'The Struggle for Formal Work: The Everyday Experiences of Russia's Central Asian Labour Migrants', in Turaeva, R & Urinboev, R (Eds.), *Labour, Mobility and Informal Practices in Russia, Central Asia and Eastern Europe: Power, Institutions and Mobile Actors in Transnational Space*, pp. 19–35, <https://library.oapen.org/viewer/web/viewer.html?file=/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/48473/9781000393231.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.
- [19] FIDH (2016), 'Women and Children from Kyrgyzstan Affected by Migration: An Exacerbated Vulnerability', https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/rapport_kyrgyzstan_uk-2-web2.pdf.
- [20] See [18]
- [21] Chudinovskikh, O & Denisenko, M (2020), 'Labour Migration on the Post-Soviet Territory', in Denisenko, M, Strozza, S & Light, M (Eds.), *Migration from the Newly Independent States: 25 Years After the Collapse of the USSR*, pp. 55–80, https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-36075-7_4.
- [22] FIDH (2011), 'Tajikistan: Exporting the Workforce – At What Price?', https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/taj_report-2.pdf.
- [23] See [19]
- [24] Nikiforova, E & Brednikova, O (2018), 'On Labor Migration to Russia: Central Asian Migrants and Migrant Families in the Matrix of Russia's Bordering Policies. *Political Geography* (66), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0962629816303225>.
- [25] See [19]
- [26] See [9]
- [27] See [19]
- [28] See [9]
- [29] Khitarishvili, T (2016), 'Gender Inequalities in Labour Markets in Central Asia', UNDP, <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/eurasia/Gender-inequalities-in-labour-markets-in-Central-Asia.pdf>.
- [30] Human Rights Watch (2024, 5 April), *Russia: In Wake of Concert Attack, Central Asians at Risk – Increase in Violence, Harassment*, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/04/05/russia-wake-concert-attack-central-asians-risk>.

[31] Imanaliyeva, A & Sorvynkov, V (2024, 11 April), 'Anti-migration Wave Hits Central Asian Guest Workers Following Moscow Terrorism Attack', <https://eurasianet.org/anti-migration-wave-hits-central-asian-guest-workers-following-moscow-terrorism-attack>.

[32] See [22]

[33] See [9]

[34] ADC Memorial with the support of FIDH (2011), 'Discrimination in the Enjoyment of Social and Economic Rights by Ethnic Minorities and Migrants in Russia', http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/ADC_ADCM_FIDH_RussianFederation_CESCR46.pdf.

[35] See [22]

[36] Eurasianet (2024, 1 May), 'Uzbekistan: Striving to improve conditions for labor migrants', <https://eurasianet.org/uzbekistan-striving-to-improve-conditions-for-labor-migrants>.

[37] Gazeta.uz (2024, 10 April), 'Uzbekistan labor migrants to access subsidies and assistance abroad', <https://www.gazeta.uz/en/2024/04/10/labor-migration/>.

[38] See [13]

[39] Lücke, M & Walter, W (2020), 'Demographic Transition and Access to Jobs in Uzbekistan: What Role for Labour Migration Beyond the Covid-19 Pandemic?', German Economic Team, https://www.german-economic-team.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/GET_UZB_PS_01_2020_EN.pdf.

[40] See [13]

[41] See [39]

[42] See [9]

[43] See [19]

[44] See [9]

[45] Varachia, Z (2020), 'Labour Migration and Human Development in Eurasia', African Migration Studies 20(1), <https://deliverypdf.ssrn.com/delivery.php?ID=654125087110030107001002095024024076025033067063006028024026075018102082121104108006025011001016026124055018092068096111119094117023037077029103070017101125113080098095052046113067004002114021028088072093120108017024088001083099077064067093096121021018&EXT=pdf&INDEX=TRUE>

[46] See [9]

[47] See [6]

[48] See [45]

[49] Ibid.

[50] White, A (2022), 'Return Migration Experiences: the Case of Central and Eastern Europe', in King, R & Kuschminder, K (Eds), Handbook of Return Migration, <https://www.elgaronline.com/edcollchap/edcoll/9781839100048/9781839100048.00031.xml>

[51] See [15]

[52] See [30]

[53] See [24]

[54] Davé, B (2014), 'Keeping Labour Mobility Informal: The Lack of Legality of Central Asian Migrants in Kazakhstan', Central Asian Survey, 33(3), <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2014.953814>

[55] See [19]

Addressing Domestic Violence in Kazakhstan: Challenges, Progress, and the Path Forward

Natalia Arkhipova

Key takeaways

- In 2023, authorities in Kazakhstan received 100,000 domestic violence complaints, marking a substantial increase from previous years.
- While international conventions like CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention provide a framework for combating domestic violence, the actual impact depends heavily on local enforcement and cultural adaptation to address specific regional challenges.
- Traditional norms and gender roles in Kazakhstan often justify violence against women and children, leading to underreporting. Therefore, it is crucial to enhance legal frameworks, improve enforcement mechanisms, and ensure the availability of support services to effectively combat domestic violence.

Introduction

Domestic violence is a global crisis, with the World Health Organization (WHO) indicating that one in three women worldwide faces physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner or a non-partner.[1] This pervasive issue has seen a marked increase during the COVID-19 pandemic, with lockdowns and heightened stress levels trapping victims and exacerbating violent situations. [2] Kazakhstan is no exception to this trend, experiencing a significant rise in domestic violence cases during the pandemic. [3][4]

In Kazakhstan, the problem is particularly severe and culturally complex. Traditional societal norms and gender roles often justify violent actions against women and children, leading to significant underreporting and a lack of recognition among victims. This cultural context, combined with regional disparities, means that domestic violence is both widespread and deeply rooted. [5]

Addressing domestic violence in Kazakhstan requires a nuanced approach that considers the country's unique cultural and regional challenges. Efforts must be made to improve reporting mechanisms, enhance legal protections, and provide accessible support services across both urban and rural areas. [6] By developing tailored strategies that address these specific issues, Kazakhstan can work towards reducing the prevalence of domestic violence and ensuring better protection for all victims.

Domestic violence situation in the Republic of Kazakhstan

Domestic violence, also called domestic abuse, includes several different acts of violence – physical, emotional, and sexual, and can include the romantic partner, children, and other family members, such as the elderly and siblings. [7] In Kazakhstan, as well as in some other communities, the predominance of the male point of view is considered quite strong, and violent actions against women and children are justified by traditional beliefs.[8]

Studies examining traditional Kazakh beliefs highlight the significant impact of cultural proverbs and practices on the status of women. Proverbs such as “If your husband treats you badly, it’s your fault” and “A girl who returns to her parental home after marriage is a disgrace to the family” reflect deep-rooted societal norms that place the onus of marital discord on women and stigmatise those seeking refuge from abusive relationships. These cultural tenets perpetuate a cycle of victim-blaming and discourage women from leaving abusive environments. [9] Furthermore, practices like bride kidnapping, which persist in some regions, exacerbate the vulnerability of Kazakh women. [10] Bride kidnapping involves abducting women and forcing them into marriage, often without their consent. This practice not only undermines women’s autonomy but also places them in situations where they are more susceptible to domestic abuse. The intersection of these proverbs and practices creates a challenging environment for women, making it difficult for them to seek help or escape abusive situations. [11]

Consequently, domestic violence cases go underreported, with many victims unable to recognise themselves as the injured parties. Due to these reasons, as well as due to the potential stigmatisation and labelling, the statistics don’t necessarily offer the real picture.[12] Yet, even from what can be seen, the problem of domestic violence is prevalent - and even on this level, the issue is difficult to challenge.

There has been more than a 40% increase in domestic violence cases in Kazakhstan since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, with many cases going unreported.[13] The continuing contact between the victim and the perpetrator contributed significantly to the growth in the number of cases. [14] Stress exacerbated by global problems, as well as economic instability also contribute to the situation. [15] This once again highlights the

urgent need for comprehensive and tailored approaches to effectively combat domestic violence and ensure all victims receive the necessary protection and support. Despite the end of the pandemic, the rise in domestic violence cases has not subsided. In 2023 alone, authorities received 100,000 complaints of domestic violence - five times more than in the last 5 years combined. This alarming increase highlights the growing awareness and reporting of domestic violence cases, though it only represents the official numbers of reported incidents. [16]



Figure 1: Activists hold a rally to support women’s rights on International Women’s Day in Almaty, Kazakhstan, March 8, 2023. (Pavel Mikheyev/Reuters)

Women make up 78% of the identified victims of domestic violence assault in Kazakhstan, with children making up 18%, and 4% comprising other age and gender groups.[17] The statistic demonstrates that domestic violence in the Republic of Kazakhstan is deeply entrenched in its society. Another study on the country’s dire situation, conducted by the UN Women in 2018, shows that around 400 women die from domestic violence every year and more than 60% of all women between 15 and 49 suffer from the violence from their partners. [18] These figures highlight the urgent need for comprehensive measures to address and mitigate the impact of domestic violence on women and children in Kazakhstan.

Addressing domestic violence is particularly important in Kazakhstan due to regional and

cultural factors that influence the prevalence and perception of the problem.[19] Traditional societal norms and gender roles can often perpetuate a culture of silence and stigma around domestic violence, making it difficult for victims to seek help and for authorities to enforce protections effectively. Additionally, the rural-urban divide in Kazakhstan means that access to support services and legal resources can vary significantly, with rural areas often lacking the infrastructure and services to help, that can be found in their urban counterparts. The regional context also reveals disparities in how domestic violence is reported and addressed. In rural areas, social and cultural barriers may prevent women from reporting abuse, while in urban centres, though there may be better access to support services, there are still significant challenges in legal enforcement and protection. [20] These regional differences necessitate tailored approaches to effectively combat domestic violence and ensure that all victims, regardless of their location, receive the protection and support they need.

Influence of International Legal Norms

International legal norms have significantly influenced Kazakhstan's approach to domestic violence legislation, providing a framework for developing effective laws. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979, is a pivotal international standard that Kazakhstan ratified in 1998.[21] Although CEDAW is often regarded as an international bill of rights for women and outlines comprehensive measures to achieve gender equality, its implementation in Kazakhstan has faced significant challenges. Despite the CEDAW Committee clarifying that violence against women constitutes a form of discrimination prohibited under the convention, translating these norms into effective domestic policies has been inconsistent. [22]

Another important international instrument is the Istanbul Convention, adopted in 2011, which is the first legally binding instrument in Europe to establish a comprehensive legal framework for protecting women against all forms of violence, known formally as the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. [23] Emphasising prevention, protection, and prosecution, the Istanbul Convention urges states to take measures to prevent violence, protect victims, and prosecute perpetrators, influencing global norms and pressuring non-member states like Kazakhstan to align their domestic laws accordingly.

Kazakhstan has made efforts to align its domestic violence legislation with these international standards, though challenges persist. The country ratified CEDAW in 1998, committing to uphold its principles, as well as signed the Optional Protocol to CEDAW in 2001. [24] However, implementation has been inconsistent, with significant gaps between international norms and domestic practices. International organisations monitoring compliance with international norms have played a crucial role in pressuring Kazakhstan to enhance its domestic violence laws. As such, Human Rights Watch has repeatedly called on Kazakhstan to criminalise all forms of domestic violence and ensure that survivors have access to justice and support services. [25] Such international scrutiny and advocacy have been pivotal in prompting legislative changes and raising public awareness about domestic violence issues in Kazakhstan, however, despite these efforts and some legislative changes, practical implementation remains insufficient, and the intended improvements have not fully materialised.

For some time, the gender equality and domestic violence issues in Kazakhstan seemed to be addressed actively.

In 1988, the National Commission for Women's Affairs and Family was established; in 2005, the Strategy of Gender Equality for 2006–2016 was adopted; in 2010, the legislation "On the prevention of domestic violence" and "On state guarantees of equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women" was adopted.

Yet, the 2017 reduction in penalties for minor physical harm, including decriminalising domestic violence, sparked criticism for not aligning with the rigorous standards set by CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention. [26] The decriminalisation of domestic violence articles in Kazakhstan followed a similar move in Russia. In February 2017, President Vladimir Putin signed a law reclassifying the offence of battery from the Criminal Code to the Administrative Code, justifying the decision by arguing that people should be given a "chance to remain in the healthy part of society." Kazakhstan had its own motives for such a change. In 2016, Prosecutor General Zhakip Assanov noted a decline in holding individuals accountable for domestic violence, attributing this to the private nature of family disputes, which require victims to independently find witnesses and evidence, a task that is often challenging.[27]

Bishimbaev's case as a catalyst

In November 2023, Kuandyk Bishimbaev, a prominent former economy minister, was charged with the murder of his wife, Saltanat Nukenova. This high-profile case underscored significant gaps in legal protections and catalysed a nationwide dialogue on domestic violence.[28]

Bishimbaev's case not only drew the attention of Kazakhstan but also captivated a global audience. Media outlets such as The Diplomat, BBC, and Al Jazeera provided extensive coverage, highlighting the prosecution process and revealing the stark realities of the existing domestic violence legislation in Kazakhstan. [29]

This high-profile case underscored significant gaps in legal protections and catalysed a nationwide dialogue on domestic violence. [30]The public outcry and international attention surrounding Bishimbaev's case were instrumental in driving legislative changes.



Figure 2:Kazakhstan's former Economy Minister Kuandyk Bishimbayev, charged with beating his wife to death, attends a court hearing in Astana, Kazakhstan, April 3, 2024 (Turar Kazangapov/Reuters)

The widespread coverage of the trial highlighted the weaknesses in Kazakhstan's domestic violence laws, which previously allowed for lighter penalties for minor physical harm. This case prompted legal reform, as it revealed the urgent need to provide better protection for victims and hold perpetrators accountable.[31]

In response to the public demand for stronger legal protections, Kazakhstan introduced a new law on April 15, 2024.[32] This law marked a significant shift in the country's approach to domestic violence. The legislation reimposed criminal penalties for battery and intentional infliction of light bodily harm, specifically targeting offences committed against individuals in vulnerable positions, such as those who are financially or otherwise dependent on the perpetrator. These offences, previously decriminalised in 2017, now carry tougher penalties, reflecting a more stringent stance against domestic violence.[33] The new law includes crucial provisions to protect victims and enhance law enforcement, such as shifting

the duty of evidence collection to the police, requiring them to register and investigate all domestic violence reports and eliminating reconciliation options in cases of repeated battery and light bodily harm – thus ensuring perpetrators face appropriate legal consequences. [34]

The implications of these reforms are significant. By criminalising specific acts of domestic violence and enhancing the responsibilities of law enforcement, Kazakhstan has taken a crucial step towards aligning its domestic laws with international standards. However, challenges remain, particularly in ensuring the effective implementation of these laws and providing adequate support for survivors. Continued efforts and sustained pressure from both national and international organisations are essential to bridge the remaining gaps and ensure comprehensive protection for victims of domestic violence in Kazakhstan. [35]

Conclusion

In conclusion, addressing domestic violence in Kazakhstan remains a significant challenge due to deeply rooted traditional norms, regional disparities, and the inconsistent implementation of international legal standards. Despite notable legislative efforts and the influence of international conventions like CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention, practical challenges persist. The alarming rise in domestic violence cases, with authorities receiving 100,000 complaints in 2023 alone, underscores the urgency of the issue.

The cultural context in Kazakhstan, where traditions often justify violence against women and children, further complicates efforts to combat domestic violence. These norms lead to underreporting and stigmatisation of victims, necessitating culturally sensitive approaches to legal reforms and support services. The high-profile case of Kuandyk Bishimbaev,

which drew national and international attention, highlighted significant gaps in legal protections and catalysed a nationwide dialogue on domestic violence. The new legislation introduced in April 2024, which re-criminalises battery and intentional harm, represents a crucial step towards aligning Kazakhstan's domestic laws with international standards.

Recommendations

- Fully implement and enforce the recent law passed on 15 April 2024, which reimposes criminal penalties for battery and intentional infliction of light bodily harm.
- Launch nationwide awareness campaigns to educate the public about the nature and consequences of domestic violence. Integrate educational programs into school curriculums and community centres to shift cultural attitudes and reduce the stigma associated with reporting domestic violence.
- While international conventions like CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention provide a framework for combating domestic violence, their effectiveness depends on local enforcement and cultural adaptation. Encourage international bodies and organisations to continue monitoring and supporting Kazakhstan's efforts to comply with these standards, ensuring that domestic laws align with global human rights and gender equality norms.

- [1] World Health Organization (9 March 2021) 'Devastatingly pervasive: 1 in 3 women globally experience violence' (Accessed 3 June 2024) <https://www.who.int/news/item/09-03-2021-devastatingly-pervasive-1-in-3-women-globally-experience-violence>
- [2] Indira Saktaganova, Svetlana Surkova, Baurzhan Smatlayev, Alpysbai Zhussupov, Kanat Abdilov (2023) 'Effectiveness of human protection from domestic violence under the administrative legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan' in 'RIVISTA DI STUDI SULLA SOSTENIBILITA' 1 T./2023, pp 279-294, DOI: 10.3280/RISS2023-001-SI018
- [3] World Health Organization (26 January 2023) 'Female health-care workers and COVID-19 in Kazakhstan: study unveils long-standing need for gender-responsive policies.' (Accessed 5 June 2024) <https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/26-01-2023-female-health-care-workers-and-covid-19-in-kazakhstan--study-unveils-long-standing-need-for-gender-responsive-policies>
- [4] Almukhanbetkyzy, Assem, and Kristi Eaton. (30 July 2020) 'Under COVID-19, Domestic Violence Intensifies in Kazakhstan.' The Diplomat, (Accessed 5 June 2024) thediplomat.com/2020/07/under-covid-19-domestic-violence-intensifies-in-kazakhstan/
- [5] Hamby, Sherry L. (2000) 'The importance of community in a feminist analysis of domestic violence among American Indians.' *American journal of community psychology* 28.5 (2000): 649-669.
- [6] Snajdr, Edward. 'Balancing acts: women's NGOs combating domestic violence in Kazakhstan.' *Domestic violence in postcommunist states: Local activism, national policies, and global forces* (2010): 111-132.
- [7] Hegarty K., Hindmarsh E., Gilles M. (2000). 'Domestic violence in Australia: Definition, prevalence and nature of presentation in clinical practice.' *Medical Journal of Australia*, 173(7), 363-367.
- [8] Fagan J., Browne A. (1994). 'Violence between spouses and intimates: Physical aggression between men and women in intimate relationships.' In Reiss A., Roth J. (Eds.), *Understanding and preventing violence: Social influences* (Vol. 3, pp. 115-292). National Academy.
- [9] Absatar, A., & Alishayeva, B. (2023). 'Bird in a Cage': Traditions and Customs That Restrict Women's Rights in the Kazakh Context as a Research Topic. *Ethics in Progress*, 14(2), 38-49.
- [10] Mekhdi L. (2023) 'Kazakhstan's Battle Against Bride Kidnapping and Gender Inequality,' *The Caspian Post*, September 23. Available online at: <https://caspianpost.com/en/post/kazakhstans-battle-against-bride-kidnapping-and-gender-inequality> (accessed 10 June 2024).
- [11] Werner, C. (2009) 'Bride Abduction in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Marking a Shift Towards Patriarchy through Local Discourses of Shame and Tradition.' *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 15(2), 314-331. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20527710>
- [12] Gqola P. D. (2015). 'Rape: A South African nightmare.' Jacana Media (Pty) Ltd.
- [13] Fergana (07 August 2020) 'More than 40% Rise in Domestic Violence Since Start of Lockdown in Kazakhstan.', (Accessed 6 June 2024) en.fergana.ru/news/120783/.
- [14] Kourti, A., Stavridou, A., Panagouli, E., Psaltopoulou, T., Spiliopoulou, C., Tsolia, M., Sergentanis, T. N., & Tsitsika, A. (2023) 'Domestic Violence During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Systematic Review.' *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 24(2), 719-745. <https://doi.org/10.1177/152448380211038690>
- [15] Mansi V., Malathesh B. C., Soumitra D., Seshadri S. C. (2020) 'COVID-19 and domestic violence against women.' *Asian Journal of Psychiatry*, 53, 102227.
- [16] Nurbek Bekmurzaev (29 April 2024) 'What stands behind Central Asia's ugly problem with domestic violence', *Global Voices* (Accessed 10 June 2024) [15] OECD Anticorruption Network for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (2018) 'Istanbul Anti-Corruption Action Plan - Fourth Round of Monitoring. Tajikistan Progress Update' (Accessed 16 March 2024) <https://web.archive.oecd.org/2019-01-25/505359-OECD-ACN-Tajikistan-Progress-Update-2018-ENG.pdf>. [17] Mussabekova, Saule & Mkhitarian, Xeniya & Abdikadirova, Khamida. (2024). 'Domestic violence in Kazakhstan: Forensic-medical and medical-social aspects.' *Forensic Science International: Reports*. 9. 100356. 10.1016/j.fsir.2024.100356.
- [18] The committee of Statistics of Kazakhstan, UN Women, UNFPA, WHO in Kazakhstan (2018) 'Sample survey on violence against women in Kazakhstan' (Accessed 6 June 2024) <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/08/sample-survey-on-violence-against-women-in-kazakhstan>
- [19] Nancy Lubin (1981) 'Women in Soviet Central Asia: Progress and Contradictions', *JSTOR*., <https://www.jstor.org/stable/151335>
- [20] Zulkapil D. (2022) 'Observance of women's rights in modern Kazakhstan: Sociological analysis.' *Женщина в российском обществе*. 2022(2):32-42.
- [21] UN Women 'Global norms and standards: Ending violence against women', (Accessed 6 June 2024) <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/global-norms-and-standards>
- [22] OHCHR Statement (08 March 2022) 'Using the international and regional legal framework to stop all forms of violence against women and girls', (Accessed 6 June 2024) <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/03/using-international-and-regional-legal-framework-stop-all-forms-violence-against>
- [23] Council of Europe 'The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)', (Accessed 6 June 2024) <https://www.coe.int/en/web/gender-matters/council-of-europe-convention-on-preventing-and-combating-violence-against-women-and-domestic-violence>
- [24] UN Women (2020) 'The Twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN THE COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION (1995) IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS', (Accessed 6 June 2024) https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/64/National-reviews/Kazakhstan_en.pdf
- [25] Human Rights Watch (9 March 2022) 'Kazakhstan Should Criminalize Domestic Violence as Part of Reforms' (Accessed 6 June 2024) <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/03/09/kazakhstan-should-criminalize-domestic-violence-part-reforms>

[26] Relief Web (16 May 2024) 'Kazakhstan's new domestic violence law is welcome but further reforms need to close remaining protection gaps' (Accessed 6 June 2024) <https://reliefweb.int/report/kazakhstan/kazakhstans-new-domestic-violence-law-welcome-further-reforms-need-close-remaining-protection-gaps>

[27] Dana Kruglova (14 July 2017) 'В Казахстане декриминализовали бытовое насилие. Как теперь будут наказывать мужей-тиранов', informburo (Accessed 10 June 2024) <https://informburo.kz/stati/v-kazahstane-dekriminalizovali-bytovoe-nasilie-kak-teper-budut-nakazyvat-muzhey-tiranov.html>

[28] Colleen Wood (14 May 2024) 'Viral Bishimbayev Trial in Kazakhstan Ends With 24-Year Sentence', The Diplomat (Accessed 6 June 2024) <https://thediplomat.com/2024/05/viral-bishimbayev-trial-in-kazakhstan-ends-with-24-year-sentence/>

[29] Айсымбат Токоева (23 April 2024) 'Звонил гадалке и переписывался со знакомой. Чтоделал экс-министр экономики Казахстана Бишимбаев, пока его супруга умирала в ресторане', BBC NEWS РУССКАЯ СЛУЖБА (Accessed 6 June 2024) <https://www.bbc.com/russian/articles/c80zvrw4jz5o>

[30] Niko Vorobyov (1 May 2024) 'In Kazakhstan, a 'storm' over domestic violence after minister killed wife', Aljazeera (Accessed 6 June 2024) <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2024/5/1/in-kazakhstan-a-storm-over-domestic-violence-after-minister-killed-wife>

[31] Zarina Akhmatova (19 April 2024) 'How the Shocking Killing of an Ex-Minister's Wife Is Forcing Change in Kazakhstan'. The Moscow Times (Accessed 6 June 2024) <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/04/19/how-the-shocking-killing-of-an-ex-ministers-wife-is-forcing-change-in-kazakhstan-a84905>

[32] Dana Omirgazy (16 April 2024) 'UN Welcomes Kazakhstan for Passing a Significant Law That Criminalizes Domestic Abuse', The Astana Times (Accessed 6 June 2024) <https://astanatimes.com/2024/04/un-welcomes-kazakhstan-for-passing-a-significant-law-that-criminalizes-domestic-abuse/>

[33] Human Rights Watch (30 April 2024) 'Казахстан: новый закон улучшен, но не доработан' (Accessed 6 June 2024) <https://www.hrw.org/ru/news/2024/04/30/kazakhstan-new-law-protect-women-improved-incomplete>

[34] "Kazinform" International News Agency (15 April 2024) 'Kazakhstan adopts law on domestic violence' (Accessed 6 June 2024) <https://en.inform.kz/news/kazakhstan-adopts-law-on-domestic-violence-ec3b6f/>

[35] EU Reporter (6 May 2024) 'Kazakhstan passes law that criminalizes domestic violence, a victory for human dignity' (Accessed 6 June 2024) <https://www.eureporter.co/kazakhstan-2/2024/05/06/kazakhstan-passes-law-that-criminalizes-domestic-violence-avictory-for-human-dignity/>

Exploring Cultural Factors and Legal Gaps Contributing to Femicide in Kyrgyzstan: A Comprehensive Analysis

Saher Husain

Key takeaways

- Kyrgyzstan has failed to adequately deal with the issue of femicide. This failure not only represents a grave social and humanitarian concern but also signifies a failure to meet the country's international legal obligations.
- Factors contributing to femicide in Kyrgyzstan include social norms, legal gaps, and ineffective enforcement of laws protecting women. Systemic issues and societal indifference contribute to a culture where perpetrators are not held accountable, increasing the risk of extreme outcomes.
- Addressing gender-based violence comprehensively is crucial in preventing femicides in the country. This requires urgent legal reforms and societal changes to protect women and girls and ensure their grievances are taken seriously.

Introduction

Around 18% of women in Central Asia have reportedly faced gender-based violence at least once in their lifetime.[1] This reflects a dangerous environment for women in the region. Svetlana Dzardanova, a human rights researcher mentioned that women in Central Asia “feel unsafe everywhere: in the streets and on public transport, at universities and in their workplaces; they feel unsafe around their husbands and ex-husbands and they have been repeatedly shown by their governments that their grievances and fears do not matter enough to prompt action.”[2]

his omnipresent fear and the lack of governmental action create a breeding ground for violence to escalate into femicide.

Femicide can be defined as the intentional killing of women or girls due to their gender.[3] It can be driven by harmful social norms, stereotyped gender roles, unequal power relations and discrimination towards women and girls.[4] In 2013, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 68/191 calling nations to take action against gender-based killing of women and girls.[5] Since then, few nations have taken positive actions to integrate femicide into their laws, including Costa Ricavi, Cyprusv,[6] and Croatia.[7] However, many countries have yet to take specific actions against this critical issue. This failure is particularly evident in the Central Asian region, especially in Kyrgyzstan, where the problem remains a widespread and underreported issue.



Figure 1: A woman holds up photos of two women killed by their kidnappers in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. (Nezir Aliyev/Anadolu/Getty, 2021)

The prevalence of femicide in Kyrgyzstan highlights deep-rooted social, cultural, and legal factors that perpetuate gender-based violence. It is crucial to examine the extent of femicide and the systemic issues contributing to its prevalence to highlight the gaps in governmental responses, and shed light on the urgent need for comprehensive measures to combat femicide in Kyrgyzstan.

The Rising Issue of Femicide

Over the years, Kyrgyzstan has seen a dangerous rise in femicide cases, with an estimated report of at least 20-30 femicides committed annually during 2009-2022.[8] A 2023 Report by UNODC and UN Women on Femicide highlights that, with home being the most dangerous place for women and girls, most femicides are committed either by their intimate partner or other known [9] Similar to the global trends shown in the Report, majority of the femicide cases in Kyrgyzstan occur within the context of intimate partner violence, often exacerbated by social and economic pressures.

Women have often been particularly brutally targeted[10] and killed by their ex-husbands.[11] Reasons given by men when asked why they killed their partner include “she interfered with watching TV”, or “slowly cooked food”. [12] Additionally, women and girls with disabilities are also targeted in the same brutal ways.[13] They face additional barriers in accessing support and protection services, which exacerbates their risk of domestic violence and femicide.

More than 180 women attempted suicide in 2023 alone because of domestic violence.[14]

While it does not come under the intentional killing aspect of femicide, it is important and relevant to monitor the extreme gender-based violence women are afflicted with.[15] This can be used as evidence to judge the forms of physical, sexual or psychological violence prior to the suicide.[16]

The Ministry of Internal Affairs reported that more than 13,000 cases of domestic violence against women and girls were registered in 2023, showing a 32% rise from the year before.[17] Prosecutor General Kurmankul Zulushev highlighted that “one of the pressing issues remains the protection of minor children, women, disabled people and the elderly from domestic violence.”[18] This link highlights that most femicides committed are likely the result of violence against women and girls that the state failed to address and prevent in due time.

Social Norms and Stereotypes Contributing to Gender-based Violence

Prevailing social norms perpetuate gender inequality and discrimination against women and girls, often leading to violence. Gulnaz Almambet kyzy, a wife and mother, highlighted that “It is considered shameful in our community when a husband does chores like washing dishes and preparing meals as these are considered purely women’s responsibilities.”[19]



Figure 2: Women with placards that read, “Raise your son” and “We need rights 365 days a year” in a rally in celebration of International Women’s Day in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on March 8 (RFE/RL, 2024)

Moreover, a mother of the women who was targeted by her ex-husband mentioned that many people in the country also accept that violence and humiliation of women by their husbands are simply facts of life.[20]

This acceptance reflects broader societal attitudes that normalise domestic violence and undermine efforts to protect women's rights. Together, these examples illustrate how cultural and social norms perpetuate harmful stereotypes and contribute to a climate where violence against women is tolerated and even justified.



Figure 3: "Daughter-in-law needs the same respect as she pays". Youth Activists use pictures to raise awareness and fight violence against women in Osh, South Kyrgyzstan (Voices on Central Asia, 2018)

Ms. Anara Aitkurmanova, UN Women Programme Coordinator, highlights that "Gender stereotypes and social norms are major drivers of violence against women and girls, but gender equality is largely viewed as a foreign or 'western' concept that undermines the traditional roles of women and men in Kyrgyz society"[21] To address these issues, there is a critical need for comprehensive strategies that not only enforce legal protections but also challenge harmful stereotypes and promote gender equality as a fundamental human right.

Efforts should include educational campaigns, community engagement, and policy reforms that aim to change attitudes towards women's roles and rights. It is essential to involve all sectors of society, including government, civil society, and the media, in promoting respectful and equitable relationships between men and women.

Legislative and Institutional Shortcomings

The state has not given adequate legal attention to femicides in the country. There has been no effort made to distinguish between a type of murder or a homicide with femicide. In the criminal code, Murder defined under article-97 only includes murder of women known to be pregnant as a specific offence.[24] This lack of differentiation fails to address the nuances of the issue, hindering effective solutions to deal with the core underlying problems that women and girls face in the country.

In 2017, Kyrgyzstan was the first country in the region to criminalise domestic violence by enacting the law, "On Safeguarding and Protection Against Domestic Violence".[24] Yet, in 2023, Kyrgyzstan was ranked the most unsafe for women in the Global Central Asia according to the Women, Peace and Security Index (WPS Index), placing 95th among 177 countries.[25] This reflects that despite legislative efforts, the implementation and enforcement of these laws remain severely lacking.

The high ranking indicates that legal reforms alone are insufficient to protect women if not accompanied by effective enforcement, societal change, and adequate support systems for victims. It underscores the need for comprehensive strategies that address the root causes of violence, ensure accountability for perpetrators, and provide robust support for survivors to create a safer environment for women in Kyrgyzstan.

One of the main issues with the system that women in the country have faced has been that of negligence on part of the law enforcement agencies.[26] Law enforcement agencies often justify men's violent behaviour through "loyalty" to "traditions", not taking domestic abuse seriously. [27] In one of the cases from September 2023, the victim was issued with 5 protective orders

against her ex-husband in just a year, however, none of them were fulfilled as the man continued to harass, eventually mutilating her. [28] The police also did not heed her complaints, and only after her situation was made public did her case receive attention from authorities.[29] Such failures and inaction on part of the authorities directly lead to and enable femicides.

The state's inability to recognise and address femicide as a distinct and serious crime reflects a broader systemic failure. The absence of a targeted approach to femicide means that many cases are not properly investigated or prosecuted, allowing perpetrators to act with impunity. To effectively combat femicide, it is crucial for the state to not only enact but also enforce laws that protect women, addressing the societal and institutional failures that perpetuate violence against women.

Furthermore, the lack of due recognition results in insufficient statistics and inaccurate data on femicide. To bridge these gaps, in 2021, the Soros Foundation–Kyrgyzstan, a national foundation launched by The Open Society Foundations (OSF), developed a database and methodology to collect data on crimes against women, statistics of murders and other crimes that led to death of women in the country. [30] This initiative has been a positive step for government agencies to adopt.

However, due to the regressive Foreign Agents Law adopted in March 2024,[31] the OSF decided to shut down its operations in the country.[32] This undermines efforts by such NGOs that are working towards the betterment women's safety in rights in the country. The government should honour its international and national commitments rather than suppressing the voices of civil society. Only through collaboration with NGOs and adherence to international obligations can Kyrgyzstan effectively tackle the issue of femicide and protect the rights of women and girls.

International Legal Standards and Obligations

Kyrgyzstan must address femicide not only as a national concern but also as an international legal obligation. According to Article 4 of the Declaration of Elimination of Violence against Women, states are to exercise due diligence in preventing acts of violence against women. [33] Moreover, states' obligation of due diligence to protect right to life requires the states to act in good faith to also effectively prevent violence against women.[34] Similarly, the General Assembly Resolution 65/228 [35] highlighted that the states must exercise due diligence to prevent and investigate acts of violence against women and punish the perpetrators, eliminate impunity, and provide protection to the victims. In line with this, the Human Rights Committee affirmed that the right to life obligates states to investigate and prosecute those responsible for unlawful deprivations of life.[36]



Figure 4: Launch ceremony of the Central Asian Alliance to End Gender-Based Violence ((UN Women Kazakhstan, 2023)

Despite these international obligations, Kyrgyzstan has struggled to adequately address domestic violence, let alone femicide. This reflects a broader structural failure and neglect in safeguarding women's rights. Moreover, these failures additionally affect women and girls with disabilities as their special needs are also not taken into account. [37] Addressing this requires not only legal reforms but also a societal shift towards gender equality and the establishment of robust mechanisms for prevention, protection, and prosecution in line with the international standards.

In the 2023 Thematic Report, Morris Tidball-Binz, the UN Special Rapporteur on extra-judicial summary or arbitrary executions, examined the issue of femicide worldwide. [38] The Report analyses and sheds light on the Latin American Model Protocol for Investigation of Gender-related Killings of Women, which provides a comprehensive framework for law enforcement and judicial authorities. It outlines steps for effective investigation, ensuring accountability, and preventing impunity, emphasising a gender-sensitive approach, victim protection, and the importance of collecting disaggregated data to understand the scope and patterns of femicide. [39] Kyrgyzstan should adopt and adapt this Protocol to fit its domestic legal framework.



Figure 5: The Central Asian Alliance to End Gender-Based Violence. (UN Women Kazakhstan, 2023)

Implementing such a comprehensive and gender-sensitive approach would provide practical guidance for investigating femicides. This would ensure that cases are handled with the necessary attention to gender dynamics, improving accountability, and preventing impunity.

On 27th June 2023, the Central Asian Alliance to End Gender-Based Violence was officially launched in Almaty, Kazakhstan as part of the Spotlight Initiative Regional Programme for Central Asia and Afghanistan, to prevent and address gender-based violence in the region. [40] Such a collective effort has been a positive way forward to ensure regional cooperation and a unified approach to this pervasive issue. Additionally, with the help of UN Women's "Women Count" initiative to improve gender data production and use in Europe and Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan has been able to positively work on its data-collection methods. [40] Kyrgyzstan should focus on more initiatives to combat femicide, not only nationally but also internationally. By actively participating in and supporting these regional alliances, Kyrgyzstan can strengthen its efforts to address gender-based violence, thereby fulfilling its international legal obligations and promoting a safer environment for all women in Central Asia.

Conclusion

The impact of femicide on women, girls, and the community is profound and far-reaching. For the victims and their families, it results in immeasurable loss and trauma, creating a climate of fear and insecurity among women and girls. This violence disrupts communities, erodes trust in legal and social institutions, and perpetuates a cycle of violence and discrimination, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive measures to address this grave issue.

Kyrgyzstan faces significant challenges in addressing femicide, with systemic failures in both legal frameworks and societal attitudes contributing to the ongoing violence against women. Despite enacting laws to combat domestic violence, the implementation and enforcement of these laws remain insufficient. To effectively address femicide, Kyrgyzstan must adopt comprehensive strategies and adhere to international obligations, fostering collaboration with civil society. Only through these measures can the country hope to protect the rights and lives of women and girls.

Recommendations

- Kyrgyzstan should enact a comprehensive law specifically addressing femicide as per its international obligations, drawing on the experiences of other nations that have successfully implemented such legislation. By studying and adapting these models, Kyrgyzstan can create an effective legal framework to combat femicide, ensure accountability, and provide better protection for women and girls.
- Equipping law enforcement and judicial personnel with the necessary training and resources to effectively handle cases of femicide and domestic violence is essential. This includes specialised training programs, updated protocols, and adequate support to ensure these cases are managed with the sensitivity and urgency required.
- Ensuring that protective orders and other legal measures are enforced and holding law enforcement agencies accountable for negligence is crucial. This includes regular oversight and consequences for failure to act, thereby strengthening the protection for victims of domestic violence and preventing further harm.
- The government should invest in and support data collection and research. Evidence and data of femicides not only within but also outside the family and perpetrated in the public sphere remains extremely limited. Collecting data is essential to better understand, address and prevent situations of vulnerability to gender-based violence and femicide.
- The government should work closely with civil society organisations, providing them with support to increase the number of women involved in the legal process. Additionally, they should ensure comprehensive support systems for survivors, including shelters, counselling, and legal aid. Conducting public education campaigns to challenge and change societal norms that condone violence against women is also crucial. These collaborative efforts will strengthen the overall approach to addressing femicide and domestic violence, ensuring a more effective and supportive response.

[1] Carolina Sánchez-Páramo and Varalakshmi Vemuru et al. (30 November 2023) "Gender-based violence affects 20% of women in ECA, costing countries billions of dollars in lost potential human capital each year." World Bank Blogs (Accessed 12 May 2024) <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/europeandcentralasia/gender-based-violence-affects-20-women-eca-costing-countries-billions-dollars>

[2] Catherine Putz (14 December 2023) "Why Do Central Asian Governments Keep Failing the Region's Women?" The Diplomat (Accessed 12 May 2024) <https://thediplomat.com/2023/12/why-do-central-asian-governments-keep-failing-the-regions-women/>

[3] UN Women (22 November 2023) "Five essential facts to know about femicide" Website (Accessed 13 May 2024) <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2022/11/five-essential-facts-to-know-about-femicide>

[4] Ibid.

[5] UN General Assembly, Taking action against gender-related killing of women and girls: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, A/RES/68/191, 11 February 2014 (Accessed 13 May 2024) https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CCPCJ/Crime_Resolutions/2010-2019/2013/General_Assembly/A-RES-68-191.pdf

[6] Pasinato, W., and de Ávila, T. P. (2023) "Criminalization of femicide in Latin America: Challenges of legal conceptualization." *Current Sociology* 71(1), 60-77. (Accessed 14 May 2024). <https://doi.org/10.1177/00113921221090252>

[7] Knews (5 October 2023) "Cyprus leads in Europe with anti-femicide law" Website (Accessed 14 May 2024). <https://knews.kathimerini.com.cy/en/news/cyprus-leads-in-europe-with-anti-femicide-law>

[8] Giulia Carbonaro (15 September 2023) "Croatia announces new bill to recognise femicide in country's criminal code" Euronews (Accessed 14 May 2024). <https://www.euronews.com/2023/09/15/croatia-announces-new-bill-to-recognise-femicide-in-countrys-criminal-code>

[9] Aigerim Turgunbaeva (27 March 2024) "The women keep being killed. Why does Kyrgyzstan not recognize femicide at the legislative level?" CABAR (Accessed 14 May 2024). <https://cabar.asia/en/the-women-keep-being-killed-why-does-kyrgyzstan-not-recognize-femicide-at-the-legislative-level>

[10] UNODC and UN Women (2023) "Gender-Related Killings of Women and Girls (Femicide/Feminicide)" Website (Accessed 15 May 2024). <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/gender-related-killings-of-women-and-girls-femicide-feminicide-global-estimates-2022-en.pdf>

[11] Aigerim Turgunbaeva (27 October 2023) "Why must we be silent?: horrific attack in Kyrgyzstan puts focus on violence against women" The Guardian (Accessed 15 May 2024). <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/oct/27/why-must-we-be-silent-horrific-attack-in-kyrgyzstan-puts-focus-on-violence-against-women#:~:text=Campaigners%20at%20the%20Femicide%20in,hide%20the%20crime%2C%20they%20said.>

[12] Gulmira Makanbai (5 April 2024) "Mother of three children killed in Bishkek, suspect detained" 24.kg (Accessed 15 May 2024). https://24.kg/english/290819_Mother_of_three_children_killed_in_Bishkek_suspect_detained/; (n 9)

[13] (n 9).

[14] Kloop (24 May 2024) "Batken: The man accused of murdering his disabled wife was sentenced to 13 years in prison" Website (Accessed 25 May 2024). <https://kloop.kg/blog/2024/05/24/batken-obvinyaemogo-v-ubijstve-suprugi-s-invalidnostyu-prigovorili-k-13-godam-lisheniya-svobody/>

[15] Meerimai Alybekova (21 May 2024) "Domestic violence: More than 180 women attempted suicide in 2023" 24.kg (Accessed 22 May 2024). https://24.kg/english/294616_Domestic_violence_More_than_180_women_attempted_suicide_in_2023/

[16] UNODC and UN Women (March 2022) "Statistical framework for measuring the gender-related killing of women and girls (also referred to as "femicide/feminicide")" Website (Accessed 15 May 2024). https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/Statistical_framework_femicide_2022.pdf

[17] Ibid.

[18] Kloop (1 February 2024) "More than 8 thousand criminal cases of violence against women were initiated in Kyrgyzstan in 2023" Website (Accessed 20 May 2024). <https://kloop.kg/blog/2024/02/01/v-kyrgyzstane-v-2023-godu-vozbuzhdeno-bolee-8-tysyach-ugolovnyh-del-po-nasiliyu-v-otnoshenii-zhenshhin/>

[19] Ibid.

[20] Spotlight Initiative (25 September 2022) "Changing social norms to end violence against women and girls in Kyrgyzstan" Website (Accessed 10 June 2024) <https://www.spotlightinitiative.org/news/changing-social-norms-end-violence-against-women-and-girls-kyrgyzstan>

[21] (n 11).

[22] (n 20).

[23] Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 68 of October 1, 1997 (as amended up to Law No. 57 of February 13, 2006), Kyrgyzstan (Accessed 15 May 2024) <https://antislaverylaw.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Kyrgyzstan-Criminal-Code.pdf>

[24] UN Women (10 May 2017) "New progressive law on domestic violence adopted in Kyrgyzstan" Website (Accessed 16 May 2024). <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/5/news-new-progressive-law-on-domestic-violence-adopted-in-kyrgyzstan>

[25] GIWPS (2023) Women Peace and Security Index (Accessed 18 May 2024). <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/the-index/>

[26] (n 9).

[27] Open Society Foundation (24 November 2021) "Q&A: Femicide in Kyrgyzstan" Website (Accessed 18 May 2024) <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/q-and-a-femicide-in-kyrgyzstan>

[28](n 9).

[29]Ibid.

[30] Kloop (28 January 2021) "I would have killed her anyway". Kloop's investigation of femicide in Kyrgyzstan" Website (Accessed 19 May 2024). <https://kloop.kg/blog/2021/01/28/femicide-in-kyrgyzstan/>

[31]Ayzirek Imanaliyeva (14 March 2024) "Kyrgyzstan: Parliament adopts contentious foreign agents law without debate" Eurasianet (Accessed 22 May 2024). <https://eurasianet.org/kyrgyzstan-parliament-adopts-contentious-foreign-agents-law-without-debate>

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ayzirek Imanaliyeva (17 April 2024) "Kyrgyzstan: The sun sets on the Soros Foundation in Bishkek" Eurasianet (Accessed 22 May 2024). <https://eurasianet.org/kyrgyzstan-the-sun-sets-on-the-soros-foundation-in-bishkek>

[34] UN General Assembly, Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, A/RES/48/104, UN General Assembly, 20 December 1993, (Accessed 25 May 2024). <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-elimination-violence-against-women>

[35]UNHR (23 October 2023) "States must eradicate femicide globally: UN expert" Website (Accessed 26 May 2024). <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/10/states-must-eradicate-femicide-globally-un-expert>

[36] United Nations General Assembly, 28 July 2023 A/78/254: Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions (Accessed 18 May 2024). <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n23/223/44/pdf/n2322344.pdf?token=Q0lwZvuzYzdEnWlZAm&fe=true>

[37]United Nations General Assembly, 31 March 2011 A/RES/65/228: Strengthening crime prevention and criminal justice responses to violence against women (Accessed 18 May 2024). <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n10/526/22/pdf/n1052622.pdf?token=tWX8GlsCdq7nZFm7lh&fe=true>

[38](n 36).

[39] HRW (14 December 2023) "Kyrgyzstan: Domestic Violence Against Women, Girls with Disabilities" Website (Accessed 29 May 2024). <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/12/14/kyrgyzstan-domestic-violence-against-women-girls-disabilities>

[40](n 36).

[41] Ibid.

[42] UN Women (10 July 2023) "Uniting for progress: Launch of the Central Asian Alliance to End Gender-Based Violence" Website (Accessed 30 May 2024). <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/stories/news/2023/07/uniting-for-progress-launch-of-the-central-asian-alliance-to-end-gender-based-violence>

[43]UN Women (15 September 2023) Brief on Making Every Woman and Girl Count in Europe and Central Asia (Accessed 30 May 2024) https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-08/women_count_newsletter_-_issue_1.pdf

Evolving Russia–Uzbekistan Relations Amidst Uzbek Labour Migrants Challenges

Anvar Kodirov

Key takeaways

- Despite global challenges, Russia and Uzbekistan are forging closer ties, evidenced by President Putin's recent state visit and their mutual commitment to expanding economic cooperation and infrastructure projects.
- Putin's recognition of Uzbekistan's growing population, as a source of human capital, highlights Russia's strategic interest in leveraging Central Asian demographics to address its own demographic challenges and labour market needs.
- To address the significant challenges faced by Uzbek labour migrants in Russia, including bureaucratic hurdles and human rights violations, it is crucial to implement improved protections and establish stronger bilateral agreements.
- Uzbekistan is actively diversifying its labour migration strategy by expanding into new markets and enhancing support systems to reintegrate returning migrants.

Introduction

The relationship between Russia and Uzbekistan is currently witnessing significant developments amidst geopolitical shifts and deepening economic collaborations. President Vladimir Putin's recent state visit to Uzbekistan emphasised the strategic importance both nations attribute to their bilateral ties, evidenced through substantial agreements in trade and infrastructure.

However, amidst these diplomatic advancements, challenges encountered by Uzbek labour migrants in Russia highlight the complex interplay between bilateral relations and socio-economic realities.

Putin in Uzbekistan: Migrant Worker Issues in Focus

Russian President, Vladimir Putin made his second state visit to Uzbekistan following his re-election in March 2024. Despite the International Criminal Court issuing a warrant for his arrest in March 2023, he was warmly welcomed in “neutral” Uzbekistan, which is not among the 123 countries that have ratified the Rome Statute.



State visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to Uzbekistan in May 2024. (President.uz, 2024)

Vladimir Putin and Uzbek President, Shavkat Mirziyoyev extended their discussions to three days, focusing on bolstering bilateral trade and economic cooperation. [1] Trade turnover between Russia and Uzbekistan has grown by 30% this year, with a new target set at \$30 billion. [2]

Russia, although surpassed by China in 2023 as Uzbekistan's largest trade partner, remains a crucial ally.[3]

Over 3,000 joint enterprises and projects worth \$45 billion are active in Uzbekistan, with an additional \$20 billion in new projects discussed in sectors such as energy, metallurgy, and petrochemicals. [4] Among the 27 agreements signed during the visit was a contract for a 330-megawatt nuclear power plant in the Jizzakh region, reflecting a scaled-down version of a previously planned 2.4-gigawatt project. [5] Independent political scientist Rafael Sattarov pointed out concerns about transparency and potential corruption in the nuclear project with Rosatom, advocating for International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) oversight. [6] Following the announcement, Uzbekistan's Energy Minister, Jurabek Mirzamahmudov, met with IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi, who expressed the IAEA's readiness to support Uzbekistan's nuclear energy plans.[7]

The issue of Uzbek labour migrants in Russia was closely followed by people hoping for updates from the meeting of two presidents. Unfortunately, despite being a matter of discussion, no official agreement was signed to ensure safe and favourable working conditions for the one million Uzbek citizens in Russia.

The history of labour migration from Uzbekistan began in the early 2000s when Russia's economy experienced rapid growth, resulting in a significant economic boom, while Central Asia lagged considerably behind. [8] Additionally, Russia's population was in decline, whereas Uzbekistan's population continued to rise. These two factors—economic conditions and demographics—led to a wave of mass migration.[9]

The peak number of Uzbekistan citizens in Russia was recorded in 2013–2014, totalling nearly, 2.6 million people. Migration growth, which began in the early 2000s, came to a halt in 2014. The current figure of one million, however, is the lowest in this past decade. This is in part due to the exodus of the Uzbek migrants, who have fled Russia following their aggressive foreign policy towards Ukraine, as well as other factors, such as the uncertain variable of the Ruble's strength in the economic sphere. In particular, the fluctuating exchange rates of dollar and the Ruble had a direct impact on migration trends. [10] In 2015–2016, the Ruble plummeted, leading to a sharp decline in Uzbek migrants moving to Russia during that period. The economic downturn, coupled with sanctions, exacerbated the exodus of migrants. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2024 also brought new challenges for Uzbek migrants, including recruitment to fight alongside the Russian army or to dig trenches and rebuild newly captured territories.[11] Russia aims to leverage Central Asia's extensive resources in its confrontation with the US-led West in Ukraine.



Figure 2: Issuing summonses to migrants at a market in Chelyabinsk, Russia. (The Moscow Times, 2023)

During President Putin's press conference at his state visit to Uzbekistan in May 2024, and in discussions at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in June 2024, he highlighted that Uzbekistan's population stands at 37 million, growing by one million each year. [12] However, in the case of Russia, is currently facing a demographic crisis: birth rates have been declining for several years, and this decline has worsened following Russia's war in Ukraine.

According to the assessment provided by experts from the A.G. Vishnevsky Institute of Demography at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE), Russia will need to attract between 390,000 and 1.1 million migrants annually until 2100 to maintain a population of 146 million people.[13]

Migrant workers also face a complex administrative process to work in Russia, requiring multiple documents such as work, and residence permits with frequent bureaucratic renewals. The stringent requirements for migrants make inadvertent violations almost unavoidable, whether due to registration issues, incorrect permits, or the use of the wrong type of patent.[14] Accumulating two or three infractions could lead to deportation or entry bans. To avoid immigration bureaucracy and potential deportation, migrants opt to obtain Russian citizenship. For instance, in 2022 alone, approximately 27,000 Uzbek citizens acquired Russian passports.[15] Following losses in the Russian army during the Ukraine conflict, Russian citizens of Central Asian origin became easy targets for forced mobilisation.

The situation worsened for Central Asian migrants after a terrorist attack at the Crocus City concert hall near Moscow involving Tajik migrants which has led to increased police raids and mistreatment. [16] This has also led to an increase in airport checks for migrants from

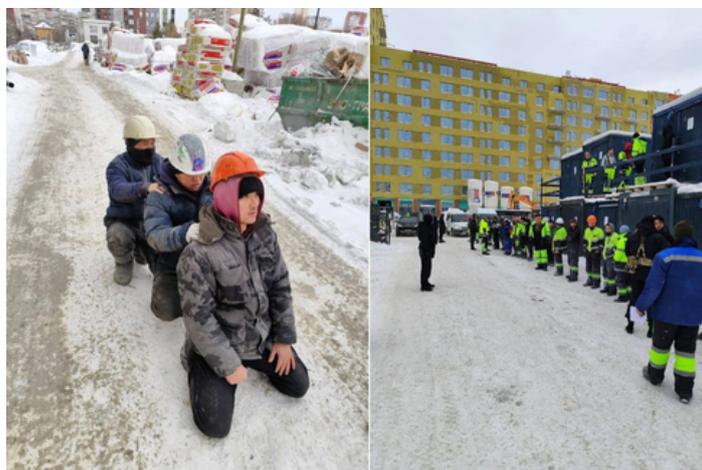


Figure 3: Massive raid on migrant workers alleged to be violating Russian migration laws in January 2024. (Daryo.uz, 2024)

Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, with many being deported back to their home countries without explanation. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, who is familiar with the conditions of Uzbek labour migrants, raised this issue in his talks with President Putin. "We placed special emphasis on the sensitive issue of labour migration, underscoring the importance of establishing systematic cooperation and implementing effective mechanisms. We took these matters very seriously. I am pleased that Vladimir Vladimirovich supported my proposals on this critical issue. I believe that we will still rectify this issue from both sides," said the President of Uzbekistan.[17]

On the other hand, the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, emphasised the substantial contribution Uzbek citizens make to the development of the Russian economy, particularly in rapidly advancing sectors such as construction, housing and utilities, and transportation and logistics.[18] He acknowledged that their remittances back home provide significant support to the economy of Uzbekistan and to families across the country. Putin stressed that it is crucial for the Russian authorities to ensure Uzbek citizens working in Russia have decent working conditions and social protection, and affirmed that collaboration with Uzbek authorities on all current migration issues will be maintained.[19] While challenges persist for Uzbek labour migrants in Russia, President Putin emphasised that ongoing diplomatic efforts are crucial to improving their working conditions and protecting their rights amidst complex migration policies and geopolitical tensions.

Transforming Uzbek Labor Migration

Traditionally, labour migration from Uzbekistan has been focused on neighbouring countries, especially Russia and Kazakhstan, which account for the majority of remittance inflows. However, recent years have seen a gradual diversification of these migration patterns.

Uzbekistan is currently implementing a new strategy to regulate labour migration.

With Uzbek labour migrants returning from Russia, the government is actively seeking to provide them with employment opportunities or redirect them to new labour markets. As of May 2024, 115,000 labour migrants have returned to Uzbekistan, and this number is expected to reach 250,000 to 300,000 by year-end.[20]

In early April, Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev issued a decree significantly expanding the authority of the government's External Labor Migration Agency.[21] Key provisions of the decree include establishing diplomatic attachés at various Uzbek embassies abroad to oversee and manage Uzbek labour migration. The countries specified in the decree include the United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates, Hungary, Germany, Latvia, Poland, and Japan.

Over the past two years, the Agency for External Labor Migration under the Ministry of Employment has facilitated the dispatch of 70,000 individuals to work in developed countries.[22] In 2022, nearly a quarter of seasonal workers arriving in the UK were from Central Asia, with Uzbekistan ranking second after Ukraine. During a January meeting, the President of Uzbekistan highlighted that a majority of Uzbek nationals abroad are employed in low-paying jobs and tasked the Ministry of Employment with training 100,000 citizens and facilitating their employment in foreign enterprises.[23] As the majority of labour migrants from Uzbekistan are in Russia's construction, housing and utilities, and transportation sectors, the Uzbek government aims to transform them into qualified, high-income professionals. Among the professionals leaving Uzbekistan for foreign labour opportunities are medical professionals. The Ministry of Employment in cooperation with the Uzbek embassies abroad have been facilitating recruitment of medical personnel from Uzbekistan to Great Britain, Germany, and Saudi Arabia.[24]

Russia has traditionally been a primary destination for Uzbek labour migrants due to the accessibility of jobs that do not require specific qualifications and only basic language skills. To explore new opportunities, vocational education institutions will offer training in various professions and targeted preparation for citizens lacking professional skills and language proficiency. To support this effort, the Agency for External Labor Migration will establish a specialised centre for foreign language training and job readiness.

Additionally, the government will partially reimburse expenses for work visas, tickets, foreign language proficiency tests, and professional qualifications. Citizens who achieve an international language certificate or its equivalent will be eligible for a 50% reimbursement of their language training costs.[25] Under the decree, Uzbek citizens who have faced violence, forced labour, discrimination, financial hardship, or lack of identity documentation during their labour migration will receive legal services provided by lawyers, legal aid organisations, or human rights groups.[26] The comprehensive reforms aim to safeguard the rights and well-being of Uzbek labour migrants, ensuring their protection and support throughout their migration journeys.

To achieve its goals, Uzbekistan is leveraging all available instruments, including political tools. On 16 June, the German newspaper Der Spiegel reported that Uzbekistan may assist Germany in deporting Afghan migrants who pose a security threat.[27] This issue gained prominence after the Mannheim knife attack, where a 25-year-old Afghan national with an "extremist motive" injured several people and killed a police officer. According to Der Spiegel, the German government proposes bringing Afghan nationals to Tashkent, where they will be transported to Kabul via the private airline, KamAir. Uzbekistan's intermediary role would enable Germany to conduct deportations without direct negotiations with the Taliban regime in Kabul. In return,



Figure 4: Medical students at a local educational institution in Uzbekistan. (Kun.uz, 2024)

the Uzbek government seeks a formal migration agreement with Germany to facilitate the entry of skilled Uzbek migrants into the German labour market.[28] From 2001 to 2021, Uzbekistan supported NATO member countries, including Germany, in their mission in Afghanistan. Today, while the Taliban government in Afghanistan remains internationally unrecognised, Uzbekistan continues to engage with its southern neighbour across various sectors. Surprisingly, Uzbekistan's diplomatic relations with the Taliban could also enhance labour migration opportunities to Germany. Uzbekistan is focused on transforming its labour policies and enhancing governance by aligning with international legal standards. In particular, those established by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations, which will strengthen protections for Uzbek labour migrants abroad and promote equitable labour practices globally. This would foster partnerships with international bodies like the OSCE and ILO and would enable Uzbekistan to develop comprehensive migration policies that uphold human rights, combat human trafficking, and ensure the safe and orderly migration of its citizens. These collaborations will support Uzbekistan in effectively managing labour migration while addressing challenges faced by migrants in host countries.

Conclusion

President Vladimir Putin's recent state visit to Uzbekistan has underscored their efforts to strengthen cooperation between the two

countries through the implementation of numerous agreements in trade and infrastructure. The construction of a nuclear power plant in Uzbekistan, the first in Central Asia, signifies a deepening bond between Russia and the region. While the challenges faced by Uzbek migrants in Russia were discussed during the visit, no official agreements were reached between the presidents. Despite this, there is optimism for improved living and working conditions for Uzbek migrants in Russia in the future. Meanwhile, Uzbekistan is actively transforming its approach to external labour migration, aiming to provide more opportunities and better terms for its citizens in new labour markets. This proactive stance by Tashkent reflects a commitment to addressing the complexities of migration while fostering economic development and cooperation with Russia and beyond.

Recommendations

- Uzbekistan should collaborate with the OSCE and ILO to develop migration policies that address challenges faced by Uzbek labour migrants. It should prioritise negotiating bilateral agreements with Russia to protect rights and improve working conditions, implementing robust monitoring mechanisms.
- Uzbekistan should overhaul its education system to include comprehensive language learning programs and vocational training aligned with the demands of international job markets. By focusing on skills in demand in partner countries, Uzbekistan can better prepare its workforce for global opportunities and foster domestic economic growth.
- Strengthen Uzbekistan's migration laws through partnerships with governments, civil society, and the private sector. Focus on enhancing legal protections, streamlining processes, and investing in education to retain skilled professionals. This approach will promote sustainable economic development and reduce dependency on migrant labour.

- [1] RIA Novosti, 'Putin completed a state visit to Uzbekistan' (РИА Новости, 28 May 2024) <<https://ria.ru/20240528/putin-1948951648.html>> accessed 12 June 2024
- [2] Dunyo Information Agency (Dunyo.info, 30 May 2024) <<https://dunyo.info/ru/mir-ob-uzbekistane/rossiyskie-smi-moskva-i-tashkent-soglasovali-povyshenie-tovarooborota-do-30-milliardov-dollarov>> accessed 17 June 2024
- [3] Fergana Agency, 'China surpassed Russia in the list of Uzbekistan's most active trading partners.' (Фергана - международное агентство новостей, 9 February 2024) <<https://fergana.agency/news/132904/>> accessed 12 June 2024
- [4] Gazeta.uz, 'Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Vladimir Putin agreed to increase the trade turnover to \$30 billion.' (Газета.uz, 27 May 2024) <<https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2024/05/27/uzb-rus/>> accessed 12 June 2024
- [5] Reuters, 'Russia to Build Central Asia's First Nuclear Power Plant in Uzbekistan | Reuters' (reuters.com, 27 May 2024) <<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/russia-build-central-asias-first-nuclear-power-plant-uzbekistan-2024-05-27/>> accessed 12 June 2024
- [6] Ozodlik Radiosi, 'Putin in Tashkent: Why Now and Why Exactly Uzbekistan?' (YouTube, 27 May 2024) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDe3BRW89TY>> accessed 12 June 2024
- [7] Kun.uz, 'Uzbekistan and the IAEA Strengthen Cooperation in Nuclear Energy Sector' (Kun.uz, 13 June 2024) <<https://kun.uz/ru/news/2024/06/13/uzbekistan-i-magat-ukreplyayut-sotrudnichestvo-v-sfere-atomnoy-energetiki>> accessed 14 June 2024
- [8] Hook Report, 'Sergey Abashin: Labor Migrants from Uzbekistan and Migration Processes. Lecture Summary - Hook!' (hook.report, 3 August 2022) <https://hook.report/2022/08/migrants-from-uzb/?fbclid=IwZXh0bG9hZWF0cmTEAAR3UIDtqEtaN5X9X-F2t9cJLkFQoejuUSGdEKxsouhfdSk2al-Jp9nLDag4_aem_AZHKcm7_afu_vq_dAFdyECugf68tg3oBwoiDZj_QSaLYmp5kubiYIDI64ofw4OCWghtP835YObRAQUAqGio83t7_> accessed 14 June 2024
- [9] Ibid.
- [10] Ibid.
- [11] Platonova A, "As Slaves, For Slaughter": Migrants from Central Asia Perish in the War in Ukraine' (BBC News Русская служба, 14 June 2023) <<https://www.bbc.com/russian/articles/ce417zgy2g5o>> accessed 15 June 2024
- [12] Kun.uz, 'Vladimir Putin expressed admiration for the population growth in Uzbekistan.' (Kun.uz, 6 June 2024) <<https://m.kun.uz/ru/news/2024/06/06/vladimir-putin-vosxitisya-prirostom-naseleniya-v-uzbekistane>> accessed 14 June 2024
- [13] cavlenko O, 'HSE Demographers: Russia May Need to Attract Up to 1.1 Million Migrants Annually to Maintain Population Numbers' (Коммерсантъ, 13 April 2023) <<https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5927967>> accessed 15 June 2024
- [14] Hook Report, 'Sergey Abashin: Labor Migrants from Uzbekistan and Migration Processes. Lecture Summary - Hook!' (hook.report, 3 August 2022) <https://hook.report/2022/08/migrants-from-uzb/?fbclid=IwZXh0bG9hZWF0cmTEAAR3UIDtqEtaN5X9X-F2t9cJLkFQoejuUSGdEKxsouhfdSk2al-Jp9nLDag4_aem_AZHKcm7_afu_vq_dAFdyECugf68tg3oBwoiDZj_QSaLYmp5kubiYIDI64ofw4OCWghtP835YObRAQUAqGio83t7_> accessed 14 June 2024
- [15] RBC, 'The Number of People Granted Russian Citizenship Decreased in 2022 for the First Time in Three Years' (РБК, 31 January 2023) <<https://www.rbc.ru/society/31/01/2023/63d8ed0b9a7947715f002efa>> accessed 15 June 2024
- [16] Boldyrev O, 'Labor Migrants in Russia After "Crocus": What They Expect and What They Fear' (BBC News Русская служба, 2 April 2024) <<https://www.bbc.com/russian/articles/cw4zz9n3dm8o>> accessed 15 June 2024
- [17] TASS, 'Mirziyoyev Intends to Tidy Up Labor Migration Issues Together with Putin' (TASS, 27 May 2024) <<https://tass.ru/ekonomika/20914319>> accessed 15 June 2024
- [18] Kremlin.ru, 'Press Statement on the Outcomes of Russian-Uzbek Negotiations' (Президент России, 27 May 2024) <<http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/74124>> accessed 15 June 2024
- [19] Ibid.
- [20] Gazeta.uz, 'Around 115,000 labour migrants have returned to Uzbekistan since the beginning of the year' (Газета.uz, 10 May 2024) <<https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2024/05/10/migrants>> accessed 15 June 2024
- [21] Gazeta.uz, 'Labor migrants from Uzbekistan will be eligible for subsidies, and if needed, assistance abroad' (Газета.uz, 9 April 2024) <<https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2024/04/09/labor-migration>> accessed 15 June 2024
- [22] Gazeta.uz, "Salaries ranging from \$1500 to \$3000": Uzbekistan's Minister of Employment discusses demand for workers in developed countries.' (Газета.uz, 3 April 2024) <<https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2024/04/03/labor-migrants/>> accessed 15 June 2024
- [23] Ibid.
- [24] UzNews, 'Uzbekistan to Send Over 10,000 Nurses and Doctors to Work in the United Kingdom' (Газета.uz, 27 April 2024) <<https://uznews.uz/posts/73201>> accessed 15 June 2024
- [25] Gazeta.uz, "Salaries ranging from \$1500 to \$3000": Uzbekistan's Minister of Employment discusses demand for workers in developed countries.' (Газета.uz, 3 April 2024) <<https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2024/04/03/labor-migrants/>> accessed 15 June 2024
- [26] Ibid.
- [27] Ibid.
- [28] Nienaber M, 'Germany Mulls Migration Pact with Uzbekistan to Deport Afghans' (Bloomberg.com, 16 June 2024) <<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024-06-16/germany-mulls-migration-pact-with-uzbekistan-to-deport-afghans>> accessed 16 June 2024

Tajikistan's Fight Against Terrorism as a Justification for National and Transnational Repression

Tara Matthews

Key takeaways

- Although the risk and impact of domestic terror attacks in Tajikistan remains low, Tajiks are at risk of being recruited into international terrorist organisations and carrying out attacks. Some of these organisations pose a risk to the Tajik state itself, damage Tajikistan's international reputation, and increase the risk of domestic terror attacks being carried out by radicalised individuals returning to Tajikistan.
- Some experts point out that socio-economic conditions and harsh repression in Tajikistan, as well as the negative experiences of Tajik migrant workers in Russia leave citizens vulnerable to radicalisation by international terrorist organisations.
- Although countering extremism and terrorism are genuine concerns for the Tajik state, evidence points to the fact that 'the fight against terror' is being used as justification for national and transnational repression, especially of political opposition groups, to consolidate the authoritarian leadership of President Emomali Rahmon and not tackling the root causes of the issue.
- More should be done by the international community to tackle the ongoing repression and human rights abuses present in Tajikistan and seek productive measures to tackle the issues of terrorism, extremism and radicalisation threatening the country.

Introduction

The 22nd March Crocus City Hall terror attacks in Moscow, which claimed at least 143 lives [1],

have brought the issue of radicalisation and terrorism of Tajiks into the international spotlight, with reports of up to eleven Tajik nationals having been arrested in relation to the attacks [2]. This is compounded by a number of international terror events involving Tajik nationals being reported in recent years [3]. Although domestic terrorism, the threat of international terror groups to Tajik sovereignty and the increasing number of Tajik nationals being radicalised remains a real threat and issue for the Tajik state, and some efforts are being made to curb these issues, the topic is repeatedly used as a justification for repression of political opposition groups both in and outside the country in order to consolidate President Rahmon's rule. This article addresses the issue of terrorism in relation to Tajikistan, the root causes of why Tajiks are a potential risk for radicalisation and how Tajikistan has used extremism and terrorism to stamp out opposition parties and create an overall environment of repression in the country.

Terrorism and Tajikistan

The issues of terrorism, extremism and radicalisation are a concern for Tajikistan both domestically and on the international stage. On one hand, the number of terror attacks and deaths resulting from attacks carried out by organised extremist organisations on Tajik soil overall appears to remain low. From 2008 – 2019, seven attacks were carried out, resulting in a total of 74 deaths [4]. Many of these attacks have also been carried out by individuals and small groups and have not been related to international terrorist organisations [5]. These attacks also do not appear related to specific ideologies or demands [6]. Many of the attacks have also been targeted at state institutions or have involved individuals with specific quarrels



A Tajik militant raises the Talbian flag at a strategic checkpoint on the Tajik-Afghan border (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 27 July 2021)

with the state rather than at the general public [7]. However, Tajikistan observes a threat from terrorist groups located in, especially, northern Afghanistan, with which it shares a lengthy border. These include groups such as Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) [8] and Jamaat Ansarullah (JA), also known as the ‘Tajik Taliban’ [9]. Both of these groups aim to overthrow governance in the area, establishing caliphates under strict Sharia Law, with Jamaat Ansarullah specifically looking to overthrow the Tajik government [10].

Furthermore, Tajik citizens appear to have become a target for radicalisation by international terrorist groups and have been linked to multiple global terror events. Tajiks have been recruited by a number of international terrorist groups, including the Islamic State of Syria and Iraq [11], as well as the aforementioned ISKP and JA, along with other groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Although estimates vary, some sources suggest that up to half of ISKP recruits come from Tajikistan [12] and large numbers in JA, fight on the Taliban’s behalf in northern Afghanistan [13]. Tajik recruits have also been able to rise to prominence in these groups, with some Tajiks occupying leadership positions. Most notable is the former head of Tajikistan’s special forces, Gulmurod Khalimov, who rose to prominence as IS Minister of War [14]. Although overall numbers of radicalised individuals returning to Tajikistan to carry out attacks have ultimately been low [15], there is concern that those individuals recruited by international terrorist organisations could return home to conduct attacks on home soil [16].

The number of international terror attacks involving Tajik nationals appearing in headlines has also been increasing. Tajik nationals were linked to a pair of suicide bombings in January this year in the city of Kerman, Iran, with one of the two individuals who carried out the attack, as well as the organiser behind the attack both being Tajik citizens [17]. Tajiks have also been named as perpetrators in other attacks in Iran in 2022[18] and 2023[19]. They have also been affiliated with attacks in Turkey [20]. On 31 December 2023, three ISIS-linked Tajik nationals were arrested on suspicion of conducting a terrorist attack in Cologne, Germany [21]. The incident in Germany is just one of a number of planned attacks in Europe that have been foiled involving Tajiks [22]. Most recently, multiple Tajik nationals were arrested in Russia in relation to the Crocus City Hall terror attacks, which has brought the issue of radicalisation in Tajikistan into the international spotlight.

Tajiks as Targets for Recruitment by Terrorist Groups

Although there is no clear path to radicalisation, and the factors leading to an individual becoming involved with a terrorist organisation are multi-faceted and complex [23], several experts have noted that domestic factors and policies of the Tajik government have created ‘fertile ground’ for radicalisation [24]. Socio-economic issues in the country are one of these factors. Tajikistan faces issues within its education system, particularly with corruption [25], high levels of unemployment [26], high levels of poverty [27] and chronic food shortages [28]. Tajikistan’s economy is also weak and relies heavily on remittances. The World Bank estimates that 30-50% of the country’s GDP relies on remittances [29]. Estimates suggest that up to 3 million Tajiks are living and working abroad at any given time and that up to 40% of Tajik households have at least one family member working abroad [30]. Many of these migrants live and work in Russia, where they work in low-paying, menial labour [31]. Furthermore Tajik, along with other Central Asian migrant workers in Russia,

face high levels of xenophobia and discrimination, along with overall difficult living conditions. The negative experiences of Tajik and other Central Asian migrants in Russia have been extensively documented. These conditions create vulnerable individuals who may be more likely to be radicalised. An overall environment of repression in the country has also been attributed as a factor contributing to the radicalisation of Tajiks. Pannier noted that Uzbeks, living under the extremely oppressive regime of President Karimov, used to be the primary group in Central Asia converted to radicalism. However since the death Karimov and the takeover of his successor Mirziyoyev, who has been comparatively more liberal, the numbers of Uzbeks involved in terrorist organisations has decreased [32]. In Tajikistan the opposite can be seen - as freedom decreases, radicalisation increases. Religious oppression in the country, where all religious activity is tightly state controlled, is another possible factor, with individuals finding themselves in the hands of extremists when seeking out alternative sources of religious education[33].



President Rahmon meets with Vladimir Putin (Wikimedia Commons, May 2024)

Domestic efforts to crackdown on the issue, which have largely relied on a heavy handed efforts, such as increased surveillance, have been criticised for addressing the “symptoms, not the root causes” of the issue [34]. Cooperation with China [35] and Russia [36] fighting the issue has only worsened this issue [37]. However, as well as being a potential cause of terrorism in the country, repression has also become an outcome of the fight against terror.

Repression in Tajikistan in Relation to Terror & Extremism

Tajikistan is a consolidated authoritarian state, which has been under the leadership of President Rahmon since 1992. Multiple international organisations [38] have evaluated an appalling human rights record in the country with reports citing issues such as arbitrary, unlawful killings, torture and restrictions on independent media. Tajikistan has seen an ongoing decline in its Freedom House score in recent years, dropping from 11 points in 2017 [39] to 5 points in the latest 2024 report [40]. It achieved a 0 out of 40 score on political rights in the 2024 report with issues such as arbitrary arrests and detentions, unjustified political prisoners, transnational repression, unfair trials and lack of independence of the judiciary cited. Many of these issues are related to the efforts of the Rahmon presidency to consolidate its power in the country. Often however, the threat of terrorism and extremism are used as a means of justification for these acts. The excuse of terrorism has resulted in the curtailing of various political and religious freedoms in the country.

Firstly, it is noted that many individuals are unfairly imprisoned on accounts of false ‘terrorism’ and ‘extremism’ charges⁴¹ [41]. These arrests often involve individuals affiliated with opposition groups or independent media who pose a perceived threat to Rahmon’s rule. In May 2024, the Tajik government issued an updated list of 29 organisations which are now listed as terrorist or extremist organisations in the country [42]. Although a large number of these organisations are legitimate terrorist organisations, a number of them continue to represent members of the Tajik opposition, including the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (Tajikistan’s former primary opposition party which until 2015 occupied seats in parliament), Group 24 (a banned opposition group currently based in Turkey) and Pamir Daily News (an independent media outlet reporting on the oppression of the Pamiri minority living in Tajikistan) [43]. In July 2023,

the websites of both Group 24 and Pamir Daily News were banned on grounds of being extremist [44]. Furthermore, swathes of journalists and bloggers have been imprisoned in Tajikistan on false extremism charges – Tajikistan has one of the lowest press freedom scores, ranking 155 on the World Press Freedom Index⁴⁵ [44]. Significant crackdowns in the Gorno-Badakhshan region on the Pamiri ethnic group, who largely oppose the central government [46], have also been touted by the Tajik authorities as “anti-extremism” efforts. As noted, many of the terror attacks that have occurred in Tajikistan have been targeted at state institutions – there is also criticism that the labelling of these events as terror incidents is politically motivated [47].



Groups protest against the visit of President Rahmon to Berlin, showing images of Tajik dissidents and opposition members (Human Rights Watch, 15 April 2024)

The Tajik state is clearly willing to manipulate and extend the definitions of “extremism” and “terrorism” to meet its political goals, crackdown on opposition and enforce its rule. The international aspect of Tajikistan’s repression is also of significant concern, highlighted in a recent Human Rights Watch report on transnational repression [48]. Many members, associates and opposition organisations labelled as extremist are forced into exile or to flee abroad – however, that does not mean they are safe from the Tajik authorities. Human Rights Watch [49] called on foreign states, particularly EU states and Turkey to refrain from sending Tajik dissidents back to Tajikistan, where they face the risk of torture and imprisonment following unfair trials. In January 2023, Abdullohi

Shamsiddin, a Tajik activist living in Dortmund, Germany was deported to Tajikistan [50]. Shamsiddin is a Tajik dissident and the son of the leader of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT). The IRPT, which was formerly the main opposition party in Tajikistan, has since been banned in the country and in 2015 was listed as a terrorist organisation. On return to Tajikistan, Shamsiddin disappeared. He was held in isolation and allegedly tortured and mistreated according to family members [51]. Following a closed unfair trial, he was sentenced to seven years imprisonment. Leading up to April 2024, multiple individuals associated with the opposition movement, Group 24 also went missing in Lithuania, Poland and Turkey [52]. The leader of Group 24, Umarali Kuvvatov, was killed in March 2015 in Turkey. Despite attempts to find safety in multiple countries abroad, the Tajik authorities attempted to kidnap Kuvvatov several times, leading many to believe that his death in Turkey was an assassination by the Tajik authorities [53]. Family members of Tajik dissidents who opt to remain at home also become targets for the Tajik security forces [54]. These cases demonstrate the extent to which the Tajik authorities are willing to go to stamp out any opposition figures, often using terrorism charges as a justification for extradition of individuals back to Tajikistan.

Conclusion

The threat of terrorism originating from Tajikistan, is a serious concern both domestically and internationally. The causes of radicalisation of Tajiks originate from Tajikistan’s domestic socio-economic factors, alongside the experience of Tajiks living abroad. Repression is also a serious cause and effect of the issue of terrorism in the country. Without efforts to deal with the issue of autocracy and human rights abuses in the country, it seems as though Tajikistan will continue to fail to address the root causes of the issue in a meaningful way and will continue to use the fight against extremism as a justification for its repressive actions.

Recommendations

- International actors should continue to call out Tajikistan on its human rights abuses and enact relevant sanctions and cease cooperation with Tajikistan where appropriate.
- Tajik authorities should seek out non-repressive means to control the issue of terrorism, extremism and radicalisation in their country, by improving domestic socio-economic conditions and allowing for freedom of religious expression.
- Tajikistan should seek a broad range of international partners to combat the real issue of terrorism and radicalisation in the country through meaningful pathways.
- States should refrain from returning dissidents back to Tajikistan to crack down on transnational repression and offer protections to these individuals, respecting the asylum seeking process.

- [1] AP News, 'The Death Toll in the Moscow Concert Hall Attack Rises to 143, While 80 Others Remain Hospitalized' AP News (27 March 2024) <<https://apnews.com/article/russia-concert-hall-shooting-toll-moscow-crocus-ce45e104781c108ff3b7f8a9d45fcef7>> accessed 10 June 2024.
- [2] RFE/RL's Russian Service, 'Another Tajik Detained In Russia Connection With Crocus Attack' Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (26 April 2024) <<https://www.rferl.org/a/crocus-city-hall-terrorist-attack-arrest-tajik-national-rights/32922016.html>>.
- [3] 'Terrorists from Tajikistan Have Become a Global Menace' (Global Voices, 22 January 2024) <<https://globalvoices.org/2024/01/22/terrorists-from-tajikistan-have-become-a-global-menace/>> accessed 8 June 2024; Neil MacFarquhar and Eric Schmitt, 'An ISIS Terror Group Draws Half Its Recruits From Tiny Tajikistan' The New York Times (18 April 2024) <<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/04/18/world/europe/tajikistan-isis-k-terrorism.html>> accessed 10 June 2024.
- [4] Edward Lemon, 'Talking Up Terrorism in Central Asia' [2018] Kennan Cable <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/kennan_cable_38.pdf> accessed 10 June 2024.
- [5] *ibid.*
- [6] *ibid.*
- [7] *ibid.*
- [8] Michael Lipin, 'Iran Reveals Afghan Origin of Islamic State Kerman Attack; Retaliation Options Limited' Voice of America (14 January 2024) <<https://www.voanews.com/a/iran-reveals-afghan-origin-of-islamic-state-kerman-attack-retaliation-options-limited/7439236.html>> accessed 9 June 2024.
- [9] United States Department of State, 'Country Reports on Terrorism 2022: Tajikistan' (United States Department of State, 2022) <<https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2022/tajikistan/>> accessed 9 June 2024.
- [10] *ibid.*
- [11] Nodirbek Soliev, 'Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan' (2015) 7 Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses 50 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/26351314>> accessed 10 June 2024.
- [12] MacFarquhar and Schmitt (n 3).
- [13] Mumin Ahmadi, Mullorajab Yusufi and Niograi Fazliddin, 'Exclusive: Taliban Puts Tajik Militants Partially In Charge Of Afghanistan's Northern Border' Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (27 July 2021) <<https://www.rferl.org/a/taliban-tajik-militants-border/31380098.html>> accessed 10 June 2024.
- [14] 'Terrorists from Tajikistan Have Become a Global Menace' (n 3).
- [15] Lemon (n 4).
- [16] Soliev (n 11).
- [17] Lipin (n 8); 'Terrorists from Tajikistan Have Become a Global Menace' (n 3).
- [18] Lipin (n 8).
- [19] 'Terrorists from Tajikistan Have Become a Global Menace' (n 3).
- [20] MacFarquhar and Schmitt (n 3).
- [21] 'New Year's Eve Terrorist Attack on Cologne Cathedral Foiled by German Police' The Telegraph (31 December 2023) <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2023/12/31/cologne-cathedral-new-years-eve-terrorist-attack-germany/>> accessed 8 June 2024.
- [22] 'Terrorists from Tajikistan Have Become a Global Menace' (n 3).
- [23] Eurasianet, 'Perspectives |Radicalization among Central Asia's Migrants: Views from the Ground' (27 April 2018) <<https://eurasianet.org/perspectives-radicalization-among-central-asias-migrants-views-from-the-ground>> accessed 9 June 2024; 'Are Tajik Government Policies Helping Create Terrorists?' <<https://www.rferl.org/a/majlis-tajikistan-terrorism-policies-to-blame/32904741.html>>.
- [24] (n 23); Bruce Pannier, 'Rising Prominence of Tajiks in Terrorist Attacks Abroad May Reflect Loss of Hope Back Home' (Intellinews, 12 January 2024) <<https://www.intellinews.com/pannier-rising-prominence-of-tajiks-in-terrorist-attacks-abroad-may-reflect-loss-of-hope-back-home-307525/>> accessed 8 June 2024; MacFarquhar and Schmitt (n 3); Marlene Laruelle, 'A New Recruiting Ground for ISIS' Foreign Affairs (14 May 2024) <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/tajikistan/new-recruiting-ground-isis>> accessed 8 June 2024.
- [25] (n 23).
- [26] International Labor Organisation, Unemployment, Total (% of Total Labor Force) (Modeled ILO Estimate) - Tajikistan' (International Labor Organisation) <<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SLUE.M.TOTL.ZS?locations=TJ-CL>> accessed 10 June 2024.
- [27] Asian Development Bank, 'Poverty Data: Tajikistan' (Asian Development Bank) <<https://www.adb.org/where-we-work/tajikistan/poverty>> accessed 10 June 2024.
- [28] World Food Programme, 'Tajikistan' (World Food Programme) <<https://www.wfp.org/countries/tajikistan>> accessed 10 June 2024.
- [29] 'Personal Remittances, Received (%GDP)- Tajikistan' (World Bank Open Data) <<https://data.worldbank.org>> accessed 10 June 2024.
- [30] (n 23).
- [31] *ibid.*; MacFarquhar and Schmitt (n 3).
- [32] Pannier (n 24).
- [33] (n 23).
- [34] Eurasianet, 'Tajikistan Striving to Convince the World That It Can Contain Terrorism' Eurasianet (18 April 2024) <<https://eurasianet.org/tajikistan-striving-to-convince-the-world-that-it-can-contain-terrorism>> accessed 8 June 2024.

[35] Orange Wang, 'China's Top Diplomat Wang Yi Vows Stronger Security, Anti-Terror Ties with Tajikistan' South China Morning Post (19 May 2024) <<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3263275/chinas-top-diplomat-wang-yi-vows-stronger-security-anti-terror-ties-tajikistan>> accessed 8 June 2024.

[36] Vusala Abbasova, 'Tajikistan Vows Joint Anti-Terrorism Efforts with Russia After Moscow Attack' Caspian News (26 March 2024) <<https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/tajikistan-vows-joint-anti-terrorism-efforts-with-russia-after-moscow-attack-2024-3-26-11/>> accessed 10 June 2024.

[37] (n 23).

[38] Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, 'Tajikistan Country Profile' (Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, 11 April 2018) <<http://humanrightscommission.house.gov/DFP/Countries/Tajikistan>> accessed 10 June 2024; 'Human Rights in Tajikistan' (Amnesty International) <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/europe-and-central-asia/eastern-europe-and-central-asia/tajikistan/report-tajikistan/>> accessed 7 June 2024; Human Rights Watch, 'Tajikistan: Events of 2023', World Report 2024 (2024) <<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/tajikistan>> accessed 10 June 2024; Norwegian Helsinki Committee, 'NHC Report to UN: Tajikistan in Deep Human Rights Crisis' (Norwegian Helsinki Committee, 5 June 2019) <<https://www.nhc.no/en/nhc-report-to-un-tajikistan-in-deep-human-rights-crisis/>> accessed 9 June 2024.

[39] Freedom House, 'Tajikistan: Freedom in the World 2017 Country Report' (Freedom House) <<https://freedomhouse.org/country/tajikistan/freedom-world/2017>> accessed 10 June 2024.

[40] 'Tajikistan: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report' (Freedom House) <<https://freedomhouse.org/country/tajikistan/freedom-world/2024>> accessed 10 June 2024.

[41] 'Human Rights in Tajikistan' (n 38).

[42] Radio Ozodi, 'From IRPT to "New Tajikistan-2". A List of 29 Banned Organizations Has Been Published' Radio Ozodi (27 May 2024) <https://rus.ozodi.org/a/ot-pivt-do-novogo-tadzhikistana-2-opublikovan-spisok-29-zapreshchennyh-organizatsiy-/32965573.html?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email> accessed 9 June 2024.

[43] *ibid.*

[44] RFE/RL's Tajik Service, 'Tajik Authorities Label Pamir Daily News Website Extremist' Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (20 July 2024) <<https://www.rferl.org/a/tajik-authorities-label-pamir-daily-news-extremist/32511551.html>>; 'Tajikistan Labels Opposition Group's Website Extremist' <<https://www.rferl.org/a/tajikistan-group-24-website-banned-extremist/32520928.html>> accessed 10 June 2024.

[45] Reporters Without Borders, 'Reporters Without Borders Index' (Reporters Without Borders, 2024) <<https://rsf.org/en/index>> accessed 10 June 2024.

[46] Bruce Pannier, 'Explainer | Why Tajikistan's Pamiris Don't Trust Their Government' Eurasianet (23 May 2022) <<https://eurasianet.org/explainer-why-tajikistans-pamiris-dont-trust-their-government>> accessed 10 June 2024.

[47] Lemon (n 4).

[48] Lily Sparks, "'We Will Find You' A Global Look at How Governments Repress Nationals Abroad" [2024] Human Rights Watch <<https://www.hrw.org/report/2024/02/22/we-will-find-you/global-look-how-governments-repress-nationals-abroad>> accessed 9 June 2024.

[49] Human Rights Watch, 'Tajikistan: EU States, Türkiye Should Not Return Dissidents' (15 April 2024) <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/04/16/tajikistan-eu-states-turkiye-should-not-return-dissidents>> accessed 6 June 2024.

[50] Human Rights Watch, 'Germany/Tajikistan: Jailed after Deportation' (30 January 2024) <<https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/01/30/germany/tajikistan-jailed-after-deportation>> accessed 6 June 2024.

[51] Freedom for Eurasia, 'Unlawful Court Verdict against Tajik Dissident Abdullohi Shamsiddin Was Based on Evidence Handed by German Authorities' (Freedom For Eurasia, 19 March 2024) <<https://freedomforeurasia.org/court-verdict-against-tajik-dissident-abdullohi-shamsiddin-based-on-evidence-handed-by-german-authorities/>> accessed 9 June 2024.

[52] Human Rights Watch, 'Tajikistan' (n 49).

[53] Sparks (n 48).

[54] RFE/RL's Tajik Service, "'Egg Protest" Revenge? Tajikistan Cuts Electricity To Family Homes Of Exiled Activists' Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (19 October 2023) <<https://www.rferl.org/a/tajikistan-exiled-opposition-families-electricity-cut-rahmon-egg-protest/32645691.html>> accessed 10 June 2024.

The Peace & Security Monitor is produced by the Platform for Peace and Humanity

The Peace & Security Monitor

Central Asia

Issue 8

June 2024

ISSN 2989-3038

Platform for Peace and Humanity

contact: office@peacehumanity.org

www.peacehumanity.org

