

Unrest in Nukus: Inside View

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Abstract In this analytical article, the authors study the public discussion of constitutional reforms in Uzbekistan. The reasons and necessity of amendments to the legislation are analyzed. The motives underlying the support of the President's ideas by the political parties of the country, including such parties as, among them, the Liberal Democratic, People's Democratic, as well as the Milli Tiklanish and Adolat parties, are investigated. Particular attention is paid to the open and pragmatic work of the constitutional commission established in the Parliament of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The authors explore the substance and the content of the information and psychological influence, including calls for separatist actions from the outside, spread among the population of Karakalpakstan. The causes, conditions and behavior of some youth representatives participating in illegal meetings are analyzed. Observing the information flows in social networks and the Internet, the authors compiled an analytical chronology of the events that took place in Nukus from June 26 till July 3.

Key words: Republic of Uzbekistan, Karakalpakstan, unconstitutional meetings, Nukus, information technologies

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Introduction

In Uzbekistan, since the second half of 2016, large-scale socio-economic, cultural, humanitarian, socio-political projects have been implemented to strengthen the sovereign development of state institutions and the socio-economic potential of the country. The aim of the foreign policy strategy is to establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relations with developed countries and all interested states. Despite the fact that the country's foreign strategy is multi-vector, the states of Central Asia are a priority in Uzbekistan's foreign policy.

The colossal changes that took place during the leadership of the country Sh.M.Mirziyoyev should be noted. New economic conditions for free business were formed in the country. The standard of living of the population has improved. This is facilitated following the example of democratically developed states by the growth of socio-political

activity of civil society institutions, pluralism of opinions, and intensity of dialogue with the people. This is especially noticeable in such areas as ensuring human rights, religious freedoms, and strengthening the positions of the media.

It is necessary to further strengthen and develop these processes. What is happening now in the world confirms that only a state that puts its national interests and democratic values above all else can win. Uzbekistan has everything to move in this direction and gain authority and recognition in the international arena. That's how the presidential election was held in Uzbekistan in 2021, won by the incumbent president Sh.M.Mirziyoyev. During the presidential election of 2021, in the situation of the country entering a new stage of development, the emergence of new features of domestic and foreign policy, as well as a new order being formed in the world, many proposals to Basic Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan were accepted from compatriots on the political and legal aspects of the country's development and changes. At the end of 2021 Sh.M.Mirziyoyev, studied these proposals in detail and summarized them conceptually. He told the public that he would insist on the process be carried out openly, with the direct participation of the people, taking into account popular opinions and proposals. The President proposed to amend the Basic Law of the Republic through a referendum and create a constitutional commission¹. It is important to emphasize that a wide public discussion of constitutional changes attracted the attention of external forces who wanted to organize illegal anti-constitutional rallies to create protest moods, destabilize and split Karakalpak society (2). Now the situation in the Republic has returned to normal².

Materials and methods

To analyze the events in Nukus, the authors used the following research methods: (1) analysis of materials published in the media in Uzbekistan and abroad from June 26 to July 10, 2022. The content analysis method was used to study the opinions of social network users. The text analysis method was used to study the content and provocative nature of posts and discussions of social network users. To determine the objectivity of the provisions put forward and to establish the nature of the actions of participants in illegal demonstrations, an expert survey was conducted, the results of which are presented in a generalized format. The expert groups included sociologists, psychologists, political scientists, law enforcement officials and specialists from public organizations. Alongside the above-mentioned techniques, in the local communities in Nukus were held several field studies.

1 The project of the Constitutional law of the Republic of Uzbekistan – Regarding making amendments and additions to the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan // Center for development strategy, 2022. URL: <https://strategy.uz/>.

2 Svante Cornell. American expert: plans to destabilize Karakalpakstan were frustrated by Mirziyoyev's swift reaction // URL: <https://yuz.uz/ru/news/amerikalik-ekspert-mirziyoevning-tezkor-munosabati-qoraqalpogistonni-beqarorlashtirish-boyicha-rejalarni-barbod-qildi>.

Results

The country is entering a new stage of development, new features are emerging in domestic and foreign policy, a new order is being formed in the world. Therefore, during the presidential elections in 2021, many proposals were accepted from compatriots to strengthen the further development of the country through the introduction of political and legal amendments to the Basic Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan (3). The leader of the country had to accept these proposals, because they came from the people. At the end of 2021 Sh.M.Mirziyoyev, having studied these proposals in detail and summarizing them conceptually, reported the results to the public and noted that he demands that the process be carried out openly, with the direct participation of the people, taking into account their opinions and proposals.

The leading parties of the country are the Liberal Democratic Party and the Democratic Party «Milliy Tiklanish»³ – supported the ideas of the president and put forward their own initiatives, which were based on the following provisions.

First, the priority directions of constitutional reforms indicated by the president correspond to the tasks set in the charters of these parties.

Secondly, historical and modern experience demonstrate that the state develops only when the necessary conditions for economic activity are created in it and the protection of private property rights is ensured. The Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan, as a presidential party, in its political activities considers this the main factor in human improvement because the political, social and cultural freedom is impossible without economic freedom.

Thirdly, the Milliy Tiklanish Democratic Party supports the need to preserve traditional values for future generations, develop the institution of the family and society, and further develop interethnic friendship as the main point of support for ensuring national interests.

The main thing is that the country's leading political parties should not only be the initiators of constitutional reforms, but also active participants in their implementation. All other political parties, civil society institutions, every citizen of the country should also actively participate in this process. Based on this, with the involvement of specialists, practitioners, as well as the public and the media, the Constitutional Commission has been established and is working. It should be noted that such an open and pragmatic a large – scale project is being implemented for the first time.

Manifestation of openness

The Constitutional Commission, created with the participation of deputies, senators of the Parliament, specialists, representatives of public organizations and the media, operates openly and publicly. In modern socio-political conditions, to involve all

³ A legislative constitutional proposal has been given consideration // Official web-page of Oliy Mazhlis legislative house of the Republic of Uzbekist, 23.06.2022. URL: https://parliament.gov.uz/ru/events/fractions/38809/?sphrase_id=8144335.

citizens and especially young people in the process, modern information technologies were used and the website «Mening to Constitutions» was created.⁴ Specialists from non-governmental organizations and political institutions also actively participate in the work. The Constitutional Commission formed by the Oliy Majlis for amendments to the Basic Law is working on in-depth study, analysis and generalization of incoming proposals, bringing them into a conceptual form and transferring them to the relevant state bodies. On June 22, the first results of the activities of this commission were published in the newspapers «Halk Suzi» and «Narodnoye Slovo»⁵. Work collectives continue to discuss proposals for amendments and additions to the Constitution.

Discussion

The publication of the draft law on amendments and additions to the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, according to which the political and legal status of the Republic of Karakalpakstan (RK) is being reviewed, provoked a wave of discontent among the inhabitants of the region. Analytical study of websites (Makan.uz, “basekz”, “OYAN KARAKALPAK”, “Karakalpak patriot”, muharibtv, “Karakalpakstan Sovereignty 74”), Telegram channels (“Ivar Dale” and “Casus Belli”, Bignewsnetwork.com, Nationalpost.com and Politinform.net, «MIG» Ateo_Breaking), Internet publications (ElTuz, “ÁĹĜÁ ĶĀŘĀĶÁĹPĀĶŠŤÁŇ”), allowed to reconstruct the sequence of anti-constitutional events from June 26 to July 3. When the constitutional reforms became most active, destructive forces pursuing unconstitutional goals organized riots and came out with a call to turn Karakalpakstan into a separate state. Illegal demonstrations aimed at carrying out a coup d’état were organized, involving people dissatisfied with social problems, who were intoxicated with drugs and alcohol,

On June 29–30, 2022, the situation around Karakalpakstan began to become tense, which was manifested in the rallying of ethnic Karakalpaks inside the country and abroad around the idea of the unacceptability of depriving the Republic of Karakalpakstan of its sovereign status, in threats to take practical actions to protect its independence. The unfolding events indicated that destabilization of the situation was very possible in case of non-acceptance of retaliatory actions.

From the moment the project was published, a local journalist and blogger D.Tazhimuratov began to act as the unspoken leader of the discontent of the Karakalpaks. He constantly called on his audience to protect the sovereignty of the Republic of Kazakhstan by holding a rally, but only if the amendments to the draft law on the status of the Republic remain in the version published on July 5, he emphasized that the rally itself would be peaceful and agreed in advance with local authorities. However, on July 1, after the end of the Friday prayer near the local mosque, D.Tazhimuratov publicly addressed the assembled

4 My constitution. Official web page for the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan. URL: <https://meningkonstitutsiyam.uz/>.

5 A legislative constitutional proposal has been given consideration. // Official web-page of Oliy Mazhlias legislative house of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 23.06.2022. URL: https://parliament.gov.uz/ru/events/fractions/38809/?sphrase_id=8144335.

faithful citizens and stated that he had submitted an application to the Khokimiyat of Nukus to hold a sanctions rally on July 5, 2022 on the issue of maintaining the sovereign status of the Republic of Karakalpakstan. His words were met with a standing ovation and received the support of the audience, and the video of the event was replicated in domestic and foreign social media.

A few hours later, a video began to circulate on the network, in which it was reported that law enforcement officers in civilian clothes arrived at the house of D.Tazhimuratov and detained the journalist, members of his family who were in the house, citizens who allegedly witnessed this detention were detained by force. Windows were alleged to have been smashed as a result, and the detainees' blood was on the floor. The incident with the detention became a catalyst that prompted people gathered near the journalist's house to go towards the central dekhkan market of Nukus, chanting the name of D.Tazhimuratov: «Dauletmurat!»

On the way to the market, a crowd of several dozen indignant people turned into a whole protest action with the participation of a thousand residents of Nukus. At the same time, the main protesters' demand was the release of D.Tazhimuratov, while the issue of the status of the Republic of Karakalpakstan was mentioned less frequently.

On social networks and the Telegram messenger, video commentators urged the protesters not to show aggression, to remain calm and not contribute to destabilizing the situation. The editor of the Karakalpak «Makan.uz» Lalagul Kallykhanova addressed various international organizations, such as the UN, the OSCE, as well as the embassies of the USA, Great Britain, Germany in Tashkent, demanding to help Karakalpakstan to withdraw from the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The chairman of the Jokargy Kenes of the RK M.Kamalov and the previously detained journalist D.Tadzhimuratov soon arrived to the protesters, called on citizens to calm down, which had some positive effect. Nevertheless, part of those participants demanded the resignation of M. Kamalov.

At 21:30, the press service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan responded to the events in the RK, and reported that in order to prevent violations of public order and prevent citizens from committing offenses on the territory of the dekhkan market, law enforcement agencies were involved, but then public order was restored⁶.

Videos, showing how several thousand protesters continue to make noise and express their indignation near the theater named after Berdakh on Yernazar Alakuz Street, coincidentally a national hero of the Karakalpaks for the struggle for independence against the Khiva Khanate in the 19th century, began to be actively shared on social media. At the same time, law enforcement officers began firing water cannons, tear gas, and used stun grenades to stop the unsanctioned rally of protesters. Provocative videos also began to appear, in which it was reported that the leader of the unrest, D.Tadzhimuratov, was allegedly a person of non-traditional sexual orientation

6 The main aim of the constitutional reform is to secure in practice human honor and dignity, national interests // *Narodnoye slovo*. 22.06.2022. URL: <https://xs.uz/ru/post/glavnaya-tsel-konstitutsionnoj-reformy-obespechenie-na-praktike-chesti-i-dostoinstva-cheloveka-interesov-naroda>.

At 21.30 press service of the Republic of Uzbekistan Ministry for Home Affairs reacted on the RK events, pointing out that in order to prevent disturbance of public peace and prevent citizens from committing various offences of law on the territory of dekhan market were engaged forces and facilities of law enforcement authorities. There was also a claim that by that moment the public order had already been restored⁷.

Social media users started actively spreading video recordings featuring several thousand protestors keeping roaring and demonstrating their indignation next to Berdakh theatre in Ernazar Alakuz street, being the latter coincidentally karaklapak's national hero who fought for independence against Khuvin khanate in the 19th century. Meanwhile, the law enforcement officers started shooting water cannons, releasing riot control agents, using flashbang grenades in order to stop the unauthorized activities, carried out by the protestors. There also appeared provocative videos, informing that D.Tazhimuratov, the leader who incited the unrest, was a person with non-standard sexual orientation.

On July, 2 at midnight the protestors started withdrawing from the spot, except for those participants who had tried to stage the provocation. Later on, there appeared provocative information, claiming that three military transport aircrafts had left Tashkent heading to Karakalpakstan in order to suppress the protestors. Moreover, a video, featuring a man lying in blood on a lawn, presumably shot by the law enforcement officers, got viral in social media.

Zhokarga Kenes, the Cabinet Council and the RK Ministry for Home Affairs issued a joint statement, pointing out that law enforcement officers had prevented a coup attempt in the region, and by virtue thereof called for joint actions to provide social stability and security, prevent people from injudicious and wrongful actions, solve the emerging problems within the legal framework⁸.

Besides, a video, featuring a participant of the rally, dying because of a serious abdominal wound, got viral in the foreign segment of "Telegram" messenger. This video and another one, actively reposted by social media users, shows presumably a female citizen of Nukus city, claiming that the law enforcement officers coming from the Republic of Uzbekistan humiliate karakalpak people and try to suppress the riots in any possible way. In connection therewith, she appeals to the audience urging to repost the video showing the man who died because of a ball grenade explosion, as much as they can, aiming at Kazakhstan segment of social media by involving Kazakhstan bloggers in the process.

Therefore, all illegal anti-constitutional activities were staged and realized with the help of external means of information technologies, that exercised information influence in order to crash social and political stability. Thus, first news about illegal protest rallies, escalating into violent civil unrest, appeared on web pages, registered abroad and being under the foreign law. The information appeared long before the rallies began. What is more, when the illegal actions started there was created a Telegram channel, that arranged

7 Official web page of the Ministry for Home Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan. URL: <https://iiv.uz/ru/latest-news?from=2022-06-15&till=2022-07-15>.

8 Karakalpakstan authorities delivered an address regarding the events in Nukus // Nova 24, 02.07.2022. URL: <https://nova24.uz/incidents/vlasti-karakalpakstana-vystupili-s-obrashheniem-o-sobytiyah-v-nukuse/>.

efficiently the undertakings planned. To obtain such success in international information environment one needs specialized and professional training.

Meanwhile, in order to intensify the violent civil unrest and give it conceptual and ideologic coloring there appeared anti-constitutional theses. Pre-prepared video footages in support of the participants of illegal rallies started getting posted internationally.

Afterwards, pre-prepared instructions, elaborated by professionals, were applied to guide the protestors' actions and control the unfolding events. Those instructions were used both in Nukus city and outside the country, some of them being aimed at spreading requests for help in Russian and in English, others being aimed at instruction on how to obtain vehicles, assault on checkpoints in order to obtain weapons, withdraw hunting shotguns from the civilians, teaching how to use clubs, stones and other improvised resources. Professional use of information technologies from the outside the country is established to have exercised a great influence over the outbreak and further development of the events in Nukus. To organize anti-constitutional rallies of such a magnitude one should attract specially trained professionals, organizational, financial, ideologic mobilization, being the time an issue of paramount importance.

Along with these, with a view to exacerbate the violent civil unrest and grant it conceptual and ideologic coloring there appeared anti-constitutional theses, that is, basic ideas. There started to get posted internationally video footages, supporting the illegal rallies and their participants. It should be noted that video footages of such quality cannot be shot in such a short period of time, which implies that they had been prepared in advance. Two hours after the rallies began there appeared sort of instructions on how to regulate forces and activities of the riots, whose emotional charge was at peak. There also appeared moderators. All of them wore red (the clothes being of modern brands) outfit and manipulated the disorders in a masterly fashion. Due to their guidance the magnitude of the protest movement started to amplify. In order to make the rallies grow into violent public disorders, they intoxicated the protestors with psychoactive substances, pretending to be providing them with food. Meanwhile, there were created discourses in well-structured Russian and English languages requesting for help, to be sent to foreign countries, international organizations and mass media.

In the context of critical protest containing comments, the authors were predominantly ethnic karakalpaks, located in other countries. They kept calling to fight "to the bitter end", to "stay strong in the pursuit of their goals", to organize a public protest of all Karakalpakstan citizens. What is more, some local citizens' attempts to call for calm and peaceful coexistence were welcomed with accusations of having betrayed the Karakalpak people⁹.

External reaction: mutual trust and responsibility

In those critical days neighboring states and developed countries (Russia, the USA, the PRC, Turkey), international organizations (the UN, the European Union, the SCO) expressed their attitude to the ongoing events. Let us analyze the main trends of their declarations.

⁹ Interview with Saifiddin Zhuraev about the protest rallies in Karakalpakstan. Khun Uz, 13.07.2022. URL: <https://kun.uz/21477486>.

First, they supported the well-timed particular actions of the country's leadership implemented in order to maintain public tranquility, stability and sustainable development, preserve constitutional system and legislation, supported the steps taken and expressed their respect to sovereignty and independence, territorial integrity of Uzbekistan.

Second, they called Uzbekistan to defend their rights including the right to hold peaceful rallies and speak their mind, according to the international commitments, hold a proper legal procedure in order to investigate into the instigators' and participants' actions in an open and transparent manner, basing on international norms and advanced experience.

Third, they pointed out that such subversive activities cannot be allowed. They expressed their preoccupation because of the events occurred, expressed their condolences to the families of the dead and the victims of those events.

Fourth, they demonstrated their confidence that the policy of Uzbekistan, based on centuries-long wisdom and experience, would make it possible to solve the problems arisen and provide sustainable and continual development of the Republic of Uzbekistan, as well as steadiness of national and social institutions.

Fifth, the nearest neighbors expressed readiness to provide any aid and assistance wanted and expressed their confidence, that under the skillful leadership of the president Shavkat Mirziyoev, Uzbekistan is perfectly able to maintain tranquility and unity in the country.

Pragmatic measures

In those critical days the president visited Nukus twice, he had an encounter with the members of the Republic of Karakalpakstan Zhokargy Kenesa and discussed the problems. The head of the state urgently took appropriate measures to put an end to disorders, provide peace and security to the citizens¹⁰. The most important thing is that the president controlled the situation on the ground, but not sitting in his office. He visited the makhalls, talked to common people, persuaded them that the Uzbek and the Karakalpak peoples' destinies are unique and indivisible. Those meetings, arranged in order to provide peace and tranquility, calmed down the citizens and the protestors. The president also listened to the opinions and the problems of ordinary people and made particular decisions basing on the real state of affairs. He pointed out that the constitution would be modified and improved only according to the suggestions and opinions expressed by the people. After that, the project would be presented for a referendum and the citizens would express their will. The president proposed to keep intact articles 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, regarding the legal status of the Republic of Karakalpakstan. State institutions acting within their authority and according to the law took efficient measures to suppress the adverse effect on Karakalpakstan, prevent wrongful actions with respect to state security and peaceful environment in the country.

¹⁰ RUz spokesman's Telegram-channel URL: https://t.me/Press_Secretary_Uz O'zbekiston Respublikasi Prezidenti matbuot kotibining rasmiy kanali.

At the meeting on July 6, 2022, the president of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirzoyev expressed his condolences to the families of the people who died during the disorders in Nukus and wished the injured a speedy recovery¹¹. The president entrusted to Nigmatill Yuldashev, the general prosecutor, “to investigate profoundly and impartially each case and provide justified legal assessment to the actions of the participants of those events”. “The law enforcement officers’ actions should also be deeply analyzed. If they resorted to force wrongfully, they should be prosecuted criminally according to the applicable laws”, the president declared¹².

In following up the illegal rallies in Karakalpakstan in July, 1-2, 2022, the General Prosecutor’s office of Uzbekistan launched a criminal investigation under the article 159, part 4 of the Criminal Code (complot with a view to seize the power or overthrow constitutional order in the Republic of Uzbekistan, to be punished with privation of liberty for a period between 10 and 20 years) and other articles. The investigative activities under the criminal case are being held by an operational investigation group composed by the officers of Domestic Intelligence Agency, Ministry for Home Affairs, National guard, headed by the General Prosecutor’s office. Specially formed inter-institutional headquarters is to coordinate the group’s activities on investigation and intelligence operations. According to the General Prosecutor’s office, the investigation group’s version is that “particular persons, acting out of selfish motives, under a pretext of discontent with constitutional reforms, chose an aggressive way and violence and tried to destabilize the situation¹³”.

As a result of the pragmatic measures being implemented, peace and stability have been restored in Nukus and the neighboring populated localities, life having resumed the normal course. Importantly, the law enforcement authorities make all necessary steps and implement complex measures in order to bring the organizers and participants of the illegal activities to justice. The course of the process gets massive media coverage, involving representatives of both general public and mass media.

Karakalpakstan is a top priority region

A significant fact to mention is that the Republic of Karakalpakstan possesses wide territory and geographically beneficial location in the region. Moreover, Karakalpakstan is the largest among the other regions of Uzbekistan, having rather low density of population and substantial amount of natural mineral resources. The Republic of Karakalpakstan has systemic development problems (in various spheres), that has been forming for quite some time because of the ecological disaster, related to the Aral Sea (the problem of the sea drying out required immediate solution for the region’s further development and

11 RUz spokesman’s Telegram-channel URL: https://t.me/Press_Secretary_Uz O‘zbekiston Respublikasi Prezidenti matbuot kotibining rasmiy kanali

12 Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan “Regarding announcement of the state of emergency on the territory of the Republic of Karakalpakstan between July, 3 and August, 2, 2022” URL: <https://president.uz/ru/lists/view/5306>

13 The General Prosecutor’s office communicated the details of the investigation regarding the events in Nukus // *Gazeta Uz*, 04.07.2022. URL: <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2022/07/04/tergov/>

the people's welfare). This is the reason why resolution of social and economic problems by developing the regions remains a top-priority task for the Republic of Uzbekistan and its future development. In order to achieve the aims, the initiatives launched by the head of the state are aimed at transformation of Uzbekistan into a new economically powerful country, possessing modern industrial, social and economic infrastructure, transport and communication network and highly qualified personnel.

Social and economic development of the Republic of Karakalpakstan has always been prioritized for Uzbekistan. It is worth noting that one of the first visits, that Sh.M. Mirziyoev realized after being elected the president, was a visit to Karakalpakstan. The president initiated an assembly to be assisted by all the officials holding key positions in the Republic of Karakalpakstan, with the purpose to carefully investigate the situation in the Aral Sea region. According to Sh.M.Mirziyoev,

many claim that the situation in the Aral Sea region is adverse, but not all of them have seen it with their own eyes. That is why today I gathered here the leaders from the whole republic for them to breathe the Aral air, see the conditions and provide a faithful estimate. We will direct substantial funds for Karakalpakstan development¹⁴.

In the context of securing sustainable development, following the president's initiatives, there was established a special "Trust fund for the Aral Sea", aimed at promoting development in the regions facing ecological catastrophe. In 2021, while conversing with Karakalpakstan citizens, Sh.M. Mirziyoev pointed out that he paid special attention to the region, therefore, in the recent years the forces and the resources engaged started to pay off. According to the president,

people came to believe in our way's rectitude. Now we set new goals. All the leaders are now gathered in Karakalpakstan. It is the first time in the history. They came with their recourses, their teams, they elaborate their projects. We are to restore Takhtakupir's ancient glory" (3).

An important fact to mention is that the main changes in Karakalpakstan's social and economic development took place between 2017 and 2021 (the period of Sh.M.Mirziyoev's active reforms). With regard to social protection for the public and creation of worthy living conditions, solving the problem of providing people with decent housing is of paramount importance. In a point of fact, in the recent five years 4 390 thousand of square meters of housing were brought into service, 15.2 thousand places were created in pre-school institutions and 38.3 thousand places were created in schools. In the same period there were established approximately 127 thousand working positions (1).

The business activity index (IDA), calculated by the Center for economic research and reforms in January, 2022, revealed that the Republic of Karakalpakstan demonstrated the fastest growth as compared to other regions (1). The fact that the President's Resolution

¹⁴ "Many claim that the situation in the Aral Sea area is adverse, but not all of them have seen it with their own eyes": President RU, on February, 23, 2022. URL: <https://uznews.uz/posts/53728>

“About the measures concerning complex social and economic development of the Republic of Karakalpakstan between 2020 and 2023” was adopted on November, 11, 2020 gave a new impetus to promoting the key economic sectors according to the “growing points” of its cities and regions.

Nowadays the special attention paid to the region pays off. The changes concern both Nukus capital and country towns, cities, remote villages and makhall that due to the transformation grow into dynamic and progressive economic entities. According to Shavkat Mirziyoev,

in the recent five years we have learned a lot, we now believe something that previously seemed unthinkable. During my first visit I told you that culture would begin in Muynak. This is what is happening. A shining example is the airport. From now on, there will be flight connection between Tashkent-Muynak-Nukus¹⁵.

In order to make efficient the work on development of the Aral Sea area, each of Karakalpakstan regions was assigned to be in charge of one of Uzbekistan's areas. Thus, Nukus capital was assigned to Tashkent area. Complex approach to developing the region and disaster damage control demonstrate high efficiency. For example, growth of the Republic of Karakalpakstan's Gross Regional Product that has been achieved in the recent years, equals to an average rate of 5.4% a year. This is closely connected to the process of constructing primary manufacturing enterprises. Among the most significant industrial plants are Khodzheliyskiy glass manufacturing plant, Kungransky alkali manufacture, multiple production lines manufacturing construction materials and the flagship factory in gas-processing industry, Ustyurtsky gas chemical complex (1).

Conclusions

Provisional results of the analytic study speak to the presumption that all the illegal protest rallies were staged and realized by efforts of information and ideologic influence from outside, using modern information technologies, which manifests itself in the following facts.

First and foremost, the news about the illegal protest rallies that grew into violent civil unrest, started appearing on the web pages, registered abroad and acting under the law of foreign countries. In order to intensify the civil unrest and grant it conceptual and ideologic coloring there almost simultaneously appeared anti-constitutional claims. Pre-prepared video footages in support of the participants of illegal protest rallies started getting posted internationally.

Afterwards, pre-prepared instructions elaborated by professionals were efficiently applied to guide the protestors' actions and control the unfolding events. Those instructions were used both in Nukus city and outside the country, some of them being aimed at

¹⁵ Shavkat Mirziyoev. Muynak region will be assigned in charge of Tashkent area. // Uz Daily, 23.02.22. URL: <https://www.uzdaily.uz/ru/post/67338>.

spreading requests for help in Russian and in English, others being aimed at instruction on how to obtain vehicles, assault on checkpoints in order to obtain weapons, withdraw hunting shotguns from the civilians, teaching how to use clubs, stones and other improvised resources. Professional use of information technologies from the outside the country is established to have exercised a great influence over the outbreak and further development of the events in Nukus. To organize anti-constitutional rallies of such a magnitude one should attract specially trained professionals, organizational, financial, ideologic mobilization, and dispose of a long period of time to plan and implement the project.

The president did not wait the nationwide discussion of the draft legislation to finish, resorting to his right to initiate legislation, he assured the nation that the articles 70-75 of the Constitution would remain intact. This proposal was subsequently supported by Oliy Mazhilis' legislative house, the duration of the nationwide discussion being prolonged. Despite the compromise measures adopted, the disorders continued.

By efforts of the instigators from the neighboring areas there were organized "marches" of large numbers of people, mainly composed by the young generation. The most active participants of the "protest rallies" received money, alcohol and psychoactive substances. The protestors assaulted checkpoints, took possession of impact munition and weapons, launched attacks on the international airport of Nukus city, the building of the Department of Internal Affairs of Nukus city, set fire on cars, inflicted harm to many other buildings. The most grievous fact is that as a result of the unrest dozens of peaceful citizens died.

Supporting the measures implemented to restore law and order in Karakalpakstan, all the main foreign partners of Tashkent, including Central Asian countries, Turkey, the USA, the PRC, as well as the EU and SCO, voiced their support to the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of Uzbekistan. Now it is high time to give legal assessment to the actions undertaken by the law enforcement authorities, the anti-constitutional activities performed by the organizers and actual doers of the civil disorders, to reconstruct the entire picture of what happened, names of the casualties. The head of the state demonstrated his willingness to hold an open dialogue by meeting with Nukus citizens and by keeping intact the Constitution articles regarding the status of Karakalpakstan. Today life in Karakalpakstan is gradually resuming its normal course. Nevertheless, up to this moment there is detected occasional information influx from outside, aimed to discredit the international image of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The attempts to distort the events that took place and present the actions taken by the state authorities as a ferocious attempt to break up a peaceful demonstration are still being implemented. There are speculations as to objectivity of the investigation regarding the occurrence. It was officially stated that the actions implemented by the law enforcement authorities would be given legal assessment as well. In the event that there is detected wrongful resource to force, the person guilty will be held liable in accordance with the applicable legislation.

A fact that should be recognized is that there are domestic problems, that can be solved by mutual efforts, by showing mutual respect, kindness and tolerance. It is important to maintain the centuries-long fellowship and fraternity, caring relations between Uzbek and Karakalpak people in order to preserve the peaceful environment and stability currently

reigning in the country. In this respect, the head of the government initiated a wide-scope work, that has been implemented in the recent years, to develop social infrastructure, provide the population with electrical power, natural gas, potable water, improve the state of irrigational and land-reclamation networks in Karakalpakstan. Persistent efforts have been undertaken to protect and restore the ecosystem of the Aral Sea area, to secure sustainable social and economic development in the region.

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