

on Human Rights on March 30, emphasizing Hungary's support for a binding convention on the rights of minorities. On November 6, the Hungarian Parliament ratified the statute of the International Criminal Court.

### **Council of Europe**

The Committee for the Prevention of Torture report and Hungary's response to it were both published on March 29. On September 17, the Advisory Committee on National Minorities published its opinion on Hungary, noting much progress but also deep concern about the plight of Roma. Hungary signed Protocol 12 of the European Convention on November 4, 2000.

### **European Union**

Hungary continued to be regarded as a front-runner for early accession to the European Union. During a visit to Hungary on April 5, European Commission President Romano Prodi highlighted the treatment of Roma as an area for further progress. Discrimination against Roma was also flagged in a May report by Luis Queiro, the European Parliament's rapporteur on Hungary, and reflected in the resolution on Hungary adopted by the full Parliament on September 5. The November 2001 regular report from the European Commission on Hungary's progress toward E.U. accession identified a need for greater government commitment to improve the lot of Roma.

### **United States**

Secretary of State Colin Powell made no public reference to human rights in Hungary during a meeting with Foreign Minister Janos Martonyi in Washington DC on May 1 or during his visit to Budapest on May 28-30 for a meeting of North Atlantic Treaty Organization foreign ministers. Outgoing Secretary of State Madeleine Albright did raise discrimination against Roma with Minister Martonyi in Budapest in December 2000. The State Department country report on human rights practices in Hungary for 2000 reflected difficulties faced by Roma and concerns over police misconduct, and its July trafficking report criticized Hungary for failing to meet minimum standards.

## **KAZAKHSTAN**

### **HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS**

As allegations of corruption against top Kazakh officials persisted in the international press, the government continued to tighten control over political life and

the media in 2001. Journalists, editors, and opposition party activists critical of the government, especially of corruption, faced attacks, criminal charges, and other forms of persecution. At the same time, a government tax amnesty came into effect for those who transferred money from abroad back to Kazakhstan. Opposition parties said the measure legalized money laundering. In a progressive move, authorities lifted the longstanding requirement that citizens request an exit visa to leave the country.

The government resisted calls for electoral reform and hounded the political opposition. Former prime minister Akezhan Kazhegeldin, Nazarbaev's one-time rival and leader of the Republican People's Party of Kazakhstan (RNPK), was tried in absentia on charges of corruption and tax evasion and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment in September. On July 15, Kazakh officials prevented Amirzhan Qosanov, the acting chair of the RNPK's executive committee, together with opposition journalist Yermurat Bapi, from boarding a flight to the United States. They were due to testify at a U.S. congressional hearing on human rights in Central Asia. At the hearing itself, a Kazakh embassy official attempted to subpoena Kazhegeldin for a criminal trial in Kazakhstan.

The deputy chairman of the Azamat (Citizen) Party, Platon Pak, was hospitalized on January 30, after three unidentified people broke into his apartment and stabbed him. In February, unidentified assailants beat Alexander Shushannikov, of the Lad Slavic Movement, in the town of Ust-Kamenogorsk.

The government did not fulfill President Nazarbaev's pledge to implement recommendations made in 1999 by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on electoral reform. The lack of progress on electoral reforms prompted four opposition parties in February to withdraw from a joint working group with the government, organized with the support of the OSCE, on electoral reform. One party also withdrew from a roundtable discussion on electoral reform in May, citing the government's failure to adopt a new elections law.

In February, Temirtas Tleulesov, an author of two books on corruption in Shymkent, was tried in absentia and sentenced to two years of imprisonment for "hooliganism." The charges arose out of a 1999 incident in which bank security guards seriously beat Tleulesov in Shymkent. Following Tleulesov's conviction, the municipal authorities reportedly banned demonstrations planned for February 22 in support of the author.

The independent print and broadcast media suffered constant harassment and repression. Marina Soloveva, the former director of Ust-Kamenogorsk independent television, was attacked on March 6 by several men, resulting in a broken arm. Police investigators decided that no crime had taken place and charged Soloveva with making false accusations. Gulzhan Ergalieva, a journalist affiliated with the political opposition, and her husband and son were severely beaten and robbed in their Almaty home on March 1. Shortly before this incident, Ergalieva had strongly criticized the government's participation in an electoral reform working group.

Yermurat Bapi, the editor-in-chief of the independent newspaper *SolDat* (whose name is a variant of *Dat*, Let Me Speak, a paper closed last year) was found guilty on April 3 of insulting the honor and dignity of President Nazarbaev. He was sentenced to a one-year prison term, but was released under a general amnesty. The

charges related to an article published alleging that President Nazarbaev and other Kazakh officials had been funneling millions of U.S. dollars from Kazakhstan into Swiss bank accounts. The authorities confiscated the edition of the newspaper before distribution. No publishing house would print *SolDat* for eight months prior to the trial.

Bigeldy Gabdullin, editor of the opposition newspaper *XXI Vek* (21<sup>st</sup> Century), faced criminal defamation charges following the publication in October 2000 of two articles alleging corruption by President Nazarbaev. However, on April 6 the prosecutor's office issued a press release stating that it had dropped the case. Reportedly, *XXI Vek* has not been able to resume publication. On January 18, the staff of *Respublika-2000* again received violent threats after the publication of an article about corruption; in September 2000, its editor-in-chief, Lira Baisetova, was beaten after the newspaper had published a similar article.

On April 17, the Parliament passed restrictive amendments to the Law on Mass Media, which had been severely criticized by local and international organizations, including the OSCE. The law brought Internet sites under its regulation and limited the transmission of foreign television and radio programs, requiring foreign material to be reduced to 20 percent of all available airtime by January 2003. The legislation sparked protests by private television stations that relied heavily on the retransmission of Russian television and could force the closure of smaller stations.

Intolerance of nontraditional religious groups continued throughout the country. In March, two Baptists from Atyrau faced fabricated criminal charges, which church members claimed were aimed at stopping their missionary activity. In Kulsary, a small Baptist church received a prosecutor's order, dated May 2, declaring the church illegal due to lack of registration. Three U.S. students found guilty of illegal missionary activity were fined and ordered to leave the country. The Taraz procuracy sought, unsuccessfully, to ban Jehovah's Witnesses' activity.

Following the general crackdown in the region against independent Islam, four alleged members of Hizb ut-Tahrir were arrested while distributing leaflets calling for the reestablishment of an Islamic Caliphate in Central Asia. On May 10, two of the defendants were sentenced to twenty-two and seventeen months' imprisonment, respectively, and the two others were released under a general amnesty.

Prison conditions remained horrific in Kazakhstan, which had one of the highest rates of imprisonment in the world. Even after an amnesty early in the year reportedly led to the release of 26,729 prisoners, the prison population in 2001 grew to 84,000 by the end of April.

On April 13, prosecutors in Kyrgyzstan reportedly announced that they had arrested a man on charges of selling Kyrgyz citizens as "slaves" to work on plantations in Kazakhstan. A former plantation laborer claimed in the press that thousands of Kyrgyz citizens were being used as slaves in Kazakhstan.

## **DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS**

The body of a leading Uigur activist, Dilbrim Samsakova, was found in June, following her "disappearance" several weeks earlier. Her injuries indicated that she

died from a blow to the head. Samsakova had been working to prevent the extradition to China of the widow and children of a Uighur suspected of violent political activism who was killed during a police operation in Almaty last year. She observed the trial of four Uighurs charged with “terrorism” in Kyrgyzstan earlier this year.

## **THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY**

### **United Nations**

In May, the U.N. Committee against Torture considered Kazakhstan’s initial report and expressed concern about allegations of torture by law enforcement officials, the lack of investigation into allegations of torture, the insufficient level of independence of the judiciary, and the overcrowding and inadequate access to medical care in prisons and pre-trial detention centers.

In January, the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women delivered concluding observations on Kazakhstan’s initial report. The committee commended the government for the high levels of education among women, but expressed concern over a wide range of issues, including stereotyped attitudes towards women, the prevalence of violence against women and girls, trafficking in women and girls, and the rise in unemployment and poverty of women. A coalition of women’s human rights nongovernmental organizations submitted a report to the committee, recommending that the government introduce training programs to combat trafficking and provide trafficking victims with witness protection and support programs.

### **Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)**

In June, the OSCE chairman-in-office, Mircea Geoana, visited Kazakhstan, meeting with President Nazarbaev and others. Although Geoana stated that human rights must be developed along with economic, politico-military, and environmental factors, he expressed approval at the pragmatic approach to democratization adopted by the current Kazakh authorities. The OSCE ran a series of roundtable discussions on electoral reform. (See above.) Training sessions were held for local nongovernmental organizations on human rights monitoring and the development of leadership for the promotion of women’s rights.

### **European Union**

The European Commission made a formal protest to the Kazakh authorities following the introduction of the new media laws in April 2001. The European Union held the third meeting of its Cooperation Council with Kazakhstan in July, during which it praised Kazakhstan for strong economic growth in 2000 and 2001 but failed publicly to raise concerns about specific human rights abuses.

### **Council of Europe**

The Political Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe continued to consider Kazakhstan's 1999 application for observer status.

### **United States**

In a July 18 congressional hearing in Washington, a State Department representative stated that although there had been economic progress in Kazakhstan, steps towards democracy had been reversed.

The administration requested U.S. \$51.5 million in assistance for Kazakhstan for 2002, with some of the requested funds to be used for the purchase of military equipment under the Foreign Military Financing Program.

### **International Financial Institutions**

When the president of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) visited Kazakhstan in June, he stated that the country deserved more cooperation with the EBRD. He reportedly praised the economic reform process, and did not raise concerns over issues of corruption or human rights which were at odds with the EBRD's founding charter. The EBRD expected to invest about \$212 million in projects in 2001.

In February, the World Bank's Board of Executive Directors supported a new Country Assistance Strategy for Kazakhstan for 2001-2003. Depending on progress in reforms, the bank was to lend between \$270 and \$820 million over three years. If realized, this could make Kazakhstan the largest recipient of bank funding in Central Asia.

In its December 2000 assessment of the economy, the International Monetary Fund recommended that the government "ensure further transparency of the oil sector's operations and its linkages with public finance" in order to encourage fiscal management and "public accountability" over the government's use of oil revenues. It also recommended that the proposed oil stabilization fund that is meant to maximize the benefits of oil revenues and protect the economy from an unstable revenue stream "be based on the principles of transparency and public accountability." Previously, the Kazakh government had been criticized and investigated for allegedly corrupt dealings within its oil sector.

## **KYRGYZSTAN**

### **HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS**

The deterioration in respect for human rights that had dominated the lead-up to the October 2000 reelection of President Askar Akaev continued unabated in