

H.E. Mr Adil Tursunov
Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan,
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Your excellency.

I am writing to express my concern about the 203 reported administrative prosecutions initiated by the government of Kazakhstan in 2023, punishing individuals and organizations for exercising their right to freedom of religion or belief. So far, 172 of these has resulted in convictions and sentences. The penalties included fines as high as several months' average wages.

Individuals have been prosecuted for peacefully meeting for worship, sharing about their faith online or in person, teaching children about religion or trying to import religious literature. Trials were also conducted for possessing or distributing religious books, even though this is not a criminal offense according to Kazakhstani law. Muslims from the Dungan ethnic minority are disproportionately targeted compared to other groups. In addition to fines, several individuals have been banned from activity for three months. Sometimes the ban is unspecified, leaving individuals unclear about what they can and cannot do.

The international community is requesting an explanation as to why individuals and organizations continue to be punished for peacefully exercising their fundamental right to freedom of religion or belief. So far, neither Kazakhstan's human rights commissioner Artur Lastayev, the country's Religious Affairs Committee, nor the police have provided a satisfactory answer to this.

Your Excellency, I humbly ask for your intervention to ensure that:

- Justice is restored to all victims of administrative punishment on the grounds of peacefully practicing their faith;
- Legal prosecution of individuals on the grounds of peacefully practicing their religion or belief is put to an end;
- The right to freedom of religion or belief for all citizens, as stated in Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to which Kazakhstan is a signatory, is respected, promoted and protected by the state.

Sincerely,