MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 144 of the Rules of Procedure

on the situation in Kazakhstan
(2022/2505(RSP))


on behalf of the PPE Group
European Parliament resolution on the situation in Kazakhstan
(2022/2505(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Kazakhstan, in particular its resolution of 11 February 2021 on the human rights situation in Kazakhstan,

- having regard to the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Kazakhstan, of the other part, which was signed in Astana on 21 December 2015 and which entered into full force on 1 March 2020 following its ratification by all Member States,

- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the UN Convention against Torture,

- having regard to the 18th meeting of the EU-Kazakhstan Cooperation Council of 10 May 2021, to the 13th EU-Kazakhstan Human Rights Dialogue meeting held on 2-3 December 2021, and to the 18th meeting of the EU-Kazakhstan Parliamentary Cooperation Committee of 11 October 2021,

- having regard to Rule 144 of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas the general situation of human rights in Kazakhstan has deteriorated in a worrying manner during the protests erupted at the beginning of the year 2022 in Zhanaozen and spread across the country, on the basis of rising liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) prices and demanding broader changes, citing the lack of democratic representation in the government’s decision-making processes, aggravating corruption and abuses of human rights and political freedom underlying causes of their grievance;

B. whereas Kazakhstan’s geopolitical importance has grown in recent years, due to the country’s geographical position, its rich natural resource potential, which includes large deposits of uranium, precious metals and fossil fuels, facts that have managed to turn it into a target of interest for larger neighbours such as Russia and China, having in mind that, in past months and years, Kazakhstan’s efforts to develop into a hub of innovation in IT and related industries (such as BITCOIN mining, among various other ventures), raised its attractiveness in the eyes of both friends and foes;

C. whereas the European Union and Kazakhstan have been partners since the country's independence in 1991; whereas the European Union and Kazakhstan signed an Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA), the first of its kind with a Central Asian partner, brought relations between the EU and Kazakhstan to a new level and represented an important milestone in more than 25 years of EU-Kazakhstan relations. Whereas The EPCA, ratified by all EU Member States and the European Parliament, entered into force on 1 March 2020;
D. whereas the EU is by far Kazakhstan’s first trade partner (representing 40% of its external trade) and also the first foreign investor in Kazakhstan, representing 48% of total (gross) foreign direct investment (FDI) flows and approximately 60% of total net FDI stocks in 2018;

E. whereas Russia has, in the past weeks and months, positioned itself in a political-military and resource-driven offensive on the international arena, and has, for a number of years, interfered in the affairs of its neighboring countries, with the aim of destabilising them and gaining a strategic advantage at their expense;

F. whereas former President Nursultan Nazarbayev stepped down in 2019, but retained considerable power as the head of the powerful Security Council, while his family and protégés controlled Kazakhstan’s security agencies and key businesses; whereas President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev removed President Nazarbayev from his position, appointing himself head of the country’s Security Council; whereas recent developments can be interpreted also as being part of an internal struggle for control and domination and can, at least partly, explain the recent course of events;

G. whereas on 5 January, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev announced a nationwide state of emergency that includes curfew, temporary restrictions on movement, and a ban of mass gathering; whereas there has been a reported internet blackout for a five-days period intended to disrupt the protesters’ communications;

H. whereas the Kazakh authorities, starting from 6 January 2022, have initiated a wide-spread disinformation campaign, internet and media blockade to hide the state involvement in violence against the people and to discredit the peaceful demonstrations and the genuine will of the Kazakh people to seek justice, dignity and respect for their rights;

I. whereas on 6 January, forces from the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) were deployed in Kazakhstan to assist the government against protesters, marking the first time that the Russian-led military alliance had been called upon to intervene in a member state;

J. whereas on 7 January, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev issued a "shoot to kill" order against the protesters described as international terrorists;

K. whereas journalists and independent media outlets have been affected gravely, arrested and sentenced to administrative arrest for allegedly “participating in an unlawful public protest”;

L. whereas Kazakh officials stated that near 12,000 people have been detained throughout the country, and at least 164 people were killed; whereas there are reasons to believe that those numbers are not true; whereas there are continuous reports that the arrests, intimidation and torture of civil activists and ordinary people in the context of the January 2022 rallies is still continuing; whereas Kazakhstan’s current demographic is dominated by people mostly born just before or after the dissolution of the USSR and the independence of the country in 1991, that have other expectations from life and from the state than the ones of previous generations and those of their current ruling elites;

M. whereas foreign troops began leaving Kazakhstan as of 16 January;
N. whereas up until now the Kazakhstan authorities have a long record of persecuting human rights defenders and misinforming the international community about the human rights situation in the country and may have been involved in many unresolved and pending cases of killed political opponents and activists in Kazakhstan, such as Dulat Agadil, Zhanbolat Agadil, Amanbike Khairolla, Serik Orazov, Garifulla Embergenov, Dametkan Aspandiyarova, Altnybek Sarsenbaev, Zamanbek Nurkadilov, Batyrkhan Darimbet, Erzhan Tatishev, Askhat Sharipzhan, Nuri Muftakh, Aleksei Pugaev and many others;

O. whereas the crimes against civil society and human rights in Kazakhstan demand a determined and clear response from the EU, which should also include personal and economic sanctions to persons and entities involved in violent suppression of peaceful demonstrations and targeting the corrupt elements within Kazakhstan ruling elites;

1. Stands together with the people of Kazakhstan who should have a full right for a peaceful rally in a protest against the absence of reforms and in defence of a prosperous future of Kazakhstan;

2. Calls on all concerned to act with responsibility and restraint and to refrain from actions that could lead to further escalation of violence; encourages a peaceful resolution of the situation through inclusive dialogue with all stakeholders and respect for the fundamental rights of citizens; calls upon Kazakh authorities to respect the fundamental right to peaceful protest and to uphold its international commitments;

3. Calls on the Government of Kazakhstan to drop politically motivated charges and end all forms of arbitrary detention, reprisals and harassment against human rights activists, religious organisations, civil society organisations, trade unions, journalists and political opposition movements, and to allow people to freely express their political, religious and other views;

4. Urges the Government of Kazakhstan to uphold its commitments, including freedom of the press and access to information online and offline; calls on the Kazakh authorities to stop using the criminal code against activists, bloggers, journalists and others for exercising their right to freedom of expression;

5. Calls upon the EU together with international community to initiate immediately a proper international investigation of the crimes committed against the people of Kazakhstan during the two weeks of rallies in Kazakhstan, and among other matters to investigate the disappearances, as well as the reports of torture, arbitrary detention, snipers killing or wounding the peaceful protesters, among them minors, in Almaty and other towns and cities of Kazakhstan;

6. Urges the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan to monitor ongoing human rights abuses and take a strong public stance towards the violations; calls upon the EU and its Member States to develop urgently a comprehensive programme to support the civil society and democratic forces of Kazakhstan;

7. Calls on the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan to engage with the Kazakh authorities for (a) a complete withdrawal of foreign troops from Kazakhstan, (b) an open dialogue between the authorities and democratic forces of Kazakhstan, (c) an immediate release of hundreds of
political prisoners and detainees in Kazakhstan and lifting the restrictions of liberty imposed on civil society and opposition activists, as well as eradicating the torture and ill treatment in prisons, (d) further expand human rights and rule of law, support democratic elections and the governance reforms;

8. Calls upon the EU institutions to speed up the anti-corruption legislation to target corrupt officials and their supporters in Kazakhstan on the grounds of human rights abuses and money-laundering practices;

9. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the EU Special Representative for Central Asia, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, and the President, Government and Parliament of Kazakhstan.