

Weekly Bulletin

Issue 2, 13 July 2005, review of 1-10 July 2005

The Bulletin is published by the FTI/IFES Early Warning for Violence Prevention Project.

In this issue:

1. "Alerts"
 2. Weekly review
 3. Trends and expectations
 4. Conflicts and recommendations for their resolution
 5. Announcements
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1. Alerts

The situation regarding illegal land seizure in Bishkek. Individual protests as well as demonstrations by land captors may be expected in Bishkek during the next two months. For more information see below.

2. Weekly review

Election-related issues

- On July 4, 30 supporters of one of the former Parliament candidates unsuccessfully attempted to capture the building of the Supreme Court in Bishkek. Part of the would-be captors (about 10 people) got inside the building and demanded that the judge changes the decision that deregistered the candidate. They were removed from the building by the National Guard.
- From July 5 to July 10, law enforcement agencies were working in heightened security mode. Most of officers were wearing civilian clothes in order to avoid attracting the public's attention. Despite numerous statements on part of the MIA top officials, the possibility of mass disturbances arising before and after the election can not be excluded.
- According to information of employees of the Office of the Republican Trade Union of Market and Trade Workers, more than 10 thousand market workers equipped themselves with arms and joined the self-defense units to protect their businesses. Rumors of mass disturbances in which both criminals and supporters of candidates who lost the election may participate, continue to disconcert the capital.
- On July 7, ex-candidate Gaisha Ibragimova commented on her withdrawal from the election race at a press conference. Ms. Ibragimova said that she only blames the imperfection of the Kyrgyz legislation, which doesn't allow for "immediate resolution of disputes arising in the course of the Election campaign", and not the current high level authorities. Despite the positive decision of the Supreme Court that allowed her to participate in the Election, Ms. Ibragimova was not able to exercise her right due to the fact that the period of pre-election campaigning was coming to an end. In addition, the ballots printed by that time didn't carry her name. Ms. Ibragimova also opposed against any third party taking advantage of her case "to declare the election invalid".
- On July 7, law enforcement officers took into custody M. Rustamov, born in 1952, of Jiyde village of Atabek rural administration of Suzak rayon of Jalalabad oblast when he was disseminating religious leaflets that urged voters to not vote for non-faithful candidates.

- On July 10, during the election day at polling station #2012 located in the village of Blagoveshensk of Suzak rayon of Jalalabad oblast at around 15:30 several people forcibly removed I. Isakov, an observer, from the polling station. The incident took place when the Secretary of the District Election Commission put three ballots of unknown origin into the ballot box. When Mr. Isakov demanded to compose an appropriate act, observers of one of the candidates took him out of the room. Also, at the same polling station at 19:45 A. Madusmanov, an observer, was beaten during an attempt to compose an act recording another violation.
- At the polling station #134, A. Jumasheva, one of the observers, witnessed that the District Election Commission members forged signatures of voters who didn't come to vote. Overall, 206 ballots were counted to have been issued with forged signatures. The incident resulted in a serious quarrel that turned into a scuffle between the observer and S. Tentiyeva, a Commission member. A. Jumasheva was also assaulted by Abdyshukur, an observer of the K. Bakiev election team. After turning to a police officer who was "protecting" the order at the polling station Ms. Jumasheva was ignored. The police officer said that police doesn't have the right to engage without order of the Commission's Chairperson. Ms. Jumasheva said that she has evidence that K. Baiterekov's, akim of Kochkor rayon, personally met with the chairperson of the Election Commission and gave orders to add extra ballots.

Issues not related to elections

- On July 1, a picket initiated on June 30 in front of Bishkek City Hall came to an end. 200 claimants contending for land for individual housing construction on the territory of a sovkhos had participated. The rally was triggered by the fact that on May 30 the City Kenesh suspended the City Hall's resolution as of May 25, 2005 on allocation of land in the territory of the sovkhos. There were no confrontations between the rally participants and law enforcement officers sent to protect the Mayor's Office. As a result of negotiations, the City Kenesh passed a resolution that permitted allocation of land for individual construction of residential facilities in a procedure established by the law with strict compliance of order of allocation of land.
- According to the statement of G. Asanova, the press secretary of Jalalabad oblast administration, at 9:00 on July 1, about 40 people (mostly women) gathered near the building of the rural administration in the village of Karadarya of Suzak rayon. They protested against inaction of local authorities regarding provision of drinking water. They also demanded that a review of distribution of land performed during tenure of former leadership of the rural administration be undertaken. The former head of the rural administration was Asan Erkinbayev, brother of Parliament Member Bayaman Erkinbayev. The incident lasted until 12:00. According to local residents, it was organized by A. Ergeshov, member of Village Kenesh, who is a long-time opponent of A. Erkinbayev.
- On July 2, four armed servicemen of the Border Protection Service of Uzbekistan having violated the state border (by about 500-600 meters) beat up two residents of Barpin rural administration of Suzak rayon of Jalalabad oblast who were riding their horses to collect hay. The servicemen returned to Uzbek territory upon taking their horses.
- On July 2, a resident of Chekdobo village of Batken rayon came to the state administration of Batken oblast with an appeal against illegal capture of land located at the disputed area by Tajik citizens of Chorku village in Vorukh enclave (Tajikistan) and against alleged threats directed at residents of Kyrgyzstan. The fact of illegal unsanctioned capture of land was confirmed by the commission the same day with the commission consisting of representatives of oblast state administration, law enforcement agencies, border protection service of Batken rayon.
- On July 5, a group of around 100 people blocked a section of the Bishkek-Karakol highway in the area of Ornok village of Issyk-Kul rayon of Issyk-Kul oblast. The protesters demanded that D. Dyushenaliyev former head of the rural administration be released from prison where the latter was put as a result of investigation of his work during privatization of property of the Yntymak kolchoz. The blockade was removed at 19:00 by MIA forces. Some protesters were taken to the rayon police department.

- Acting Osh oblast Governor A. Artykov called a press conference on July 6 during which he highly criticized the work of A. Matubraimov, Acting President's Plenipotentiary in southern Kyrgyzstan. According to the Acting Governor Mr. Artykov, Mr. Matubraimov sabotages the work of the Acting Governor by urging oblast authorities' employees to ignore the Acting Governor's orders and decisions. Mr. Artykov also called the position of the President's Plenipotentiary a "temporary one" saying it was created only to stabilize the political situation in southern Kyrgyzstan.
- In Atbashi village of Naryn oblast people who introduced themselves as members of "Atbashi" Youth Organization disseminated leaflets among local residents that called for prohibition of transit of Chinese heavy-weight lorries in the territory of the rayon. The leaflets contain demands that a heavy-weight lorries' terminal be established in Atbashi so as to create more jobs for local population and decrease wear of the Bishkek-Torugart highway. Leaflets also call for same conditions to be set for transportation of cargoes to China and Kyrgyzstan. Currently, vehicles coming to China from Kyrgyzstan are stopped at the border and cargoes are reloaded to vehicles of Chinese transporters while Chinese cargo vehicles freely travel in the territory of Kyrgyzstan all the way to the destination points.
- On July 8, at the market of Karasuu town a mass fight took place between traders from China and Kyrgyz residents. A fistfight occurred as a consequence of Chinese traders' refusal to exchange alleged bad-quality goods for other ones. Chinese traders were joined by 15 country fellows. The Kyrgyz residents were assisted by their relatives and Kyrgyz traders (30-40 people). Similar incidents already took place at this market before. The tension between local population and Chinese traders is triggered by the pricing issues.

3. Trends and expectations

This week (1 -10 July) not much political or election-related tension was observed. The level of public tension in the capital and regions was assessed as "Low" (2 of 7) by the project's monitors. In most rayons local population assessed the situation as "same as last week". Such calmness was reinforced by wide-scale active work of law enforcement agencies that worked to ensure public security in the country. All law enforcement departments were working on high alert mode. No significant changes or serious destructive developments were registered during past week except for some isolated incidents and increase of activity of Hizb-ut-Tahrir.

Tensions related to the elections

Overall, despite a certain anxiety and possibilities of provocations, election day passed calmly and the election was considered fair and transparent. According to the Central Election Commission, the countrywide turnout was registered at 75%. Kumanbek Bakiyev was elected President of the Kyrgyz Republic having secured 88.9% of all votes. Tursunbai Bakir uulu received 3.79% of the votes, with the remaining candidates getting the following number of votes: Akbaraaly Aitkeyev – 3.59%, Jypar Jeksheyev – 0.94%, Toktaiym Umetaliyeva - 0.55% and Keneshbek Dyushebayev - 0.5%. The Central Election Commission noted that no significant violations were registered. Local and international observers concurred to this statement saying that apart from a certain number of violations, the elections were held consistently with the expression of people's will.

Relating to the **pre-election process**, at least two negative trends were registered: increase of the activity of religious groups and urges to boycott the election or vote against all. The reality proved that both urges had minimal effect on the election results. Urges to vote against all were registered in Naryn, in Chekildek village of Naryn oblast, Talas, Issyk-Kul oblast, Osh and in Chui oblast. CEC acknowledged this phenomenon. Even though such calls are legitimate according to the Election Code, it is noteworthy that agitators refused to reveal their identity.

Religious-political forces also played a role, at least psychological, among the population. Dissemination of religious and political leaflets in Kyrgyz and Uzbek were found in Osh, Jalal-Abad, Suzak and Kochkor rayons, and in Bishkek. The message of the leaflets called for not voting for non-religious (non-faithful) candidates. A man named Koldoshev was taken into custody in Osh for dissemination of such leaflets. He will be criminally prosecuted by Article 299 “Instigation of International, Racial and Religious Animosity”. The source and identity of those that disseminated leaflets are being investigated. In addition, an underground printing house of Khizb ut-Tahrir was closed down in Bishkek with three people detained. Even though these leaflets were not seen in mass volumes in the country, still their emergence concerned the population. Even though the population tends to associate these urges with the candidacy of Tursunbai Bakir uulu since his campaign contains calls for Muslim values, such a presumption was not confirmed by Tursunbai Bakir uulu himself. He considers all such leaflets as provocation aimed to discredit his candidacy. Thus, presumptions of a connection between Khizb ut-Tahrir leaflets and Bakir uulu are groundless. On the one hand, these leaflets could be an attempt by undetermined forces to discredit the religious candidate since no specific evidence was found, on the other hand, it is possible that religious forces sincerely wanted to support Bakir uulu. Rumors were widely circulated in Osh during the campaigning period and on election day that supporters of Bakir uulu are mostly people of Khizb ut-Tahrir who compactly live in Kara-Suu in Z. Nurakhunov Street. and who would possibly rally against the election. As such the existence of religious-political forces is still a obscure for the general public. However, one has to take into account that in future religious forces may express themselves through trying to achieve a political force in the country.

Recommendations regarding religious-political activity

Civil society (especially NGO and religious Muslim organizations) need to hold explanatory – educational activity with the population of Kyrgyzstan, especially with youth, about the ideology and activity of the Hizb-ut-Tahrir organization. Also, there should be activities targeted to increase the alternative activities for the youth (for example community projects).

State structures: (especially State commission on religious matters) can work on wide-scale explanatory activity among the population, through Mass Media and the institutions of local government.

Tensions not related to the elections:

The situation in **Kara-Keche** has been stabilized: the leader of the population who seized the coal pit Nurlan Motuyev has been appointed as Director of “Komur” State Enterprise. Today in his new position he demands that 30% of the profits remain in the local budget, and that only the rest go to the national budget. He also demands that the price of charcoal for local population be reduced to 300 soms per ton. However, K. Bakiyev declined this proposition saying that it may result in the enterprise’s bankruptcy, as the cost of the product extraction is higher than the cost claimed by the local population. Today the total distribution of shares is distributed as follows: 51% of shares belong to the government and 49% belongs to residents of Jumgal rayon. The population of Jumgal rayon fully supports Nurlan Motuyev. At the moment the situation has been stabilized.

The conflict at **Kara-Suu market** remains a source of public worry in the south. In the coming days 200-300 people are expected to hold a rally. The situation is that discontent people want to re-appoint the former head of market T. Usenov, and remove the present head of market A. Junusov, whom they view as the man of Bayaman Erkinbayev. Bayaman Erkinbayev is the private owner of part of Kara-Suu market and also deputy in Jogorku Kenesh of KR.

Another concern is caused by **land captors** who seized land in the capital’s outskirts (see more information in the section “Alerts”). In Osh the problem of land has also been quite acute. An assistant to the mayor says that land will be distributed only after careful investigation of the needs of people.

Among land captors are people who already own land in remote areas of the oblast. Such people will not be given any land. Despite the fact that the level of tension is low at present, this factor can become a tool in the hands of political forces that wish to manipulate the fragility of the socioeconomic situation of the southern population.

International tension keeps growing in Batken oblast. Monitors from this oblast assessed the past week as “high tension”. The situation around the Tajik enclave Vorukh is about the fact that residents of Kyrgyz **villages of Kara and Chekdobo** complain that they are periodically threatened by Tajiks to be ousted from the village. The threats are expressed in constant verbal abuses on part of young Tajik residents, pillage of wild apricot and even threats to kill. So far, three Kyrgyz families moved to other villages. On June 29, a law enforcement group was called to the scene and restored the order temporarily. Even though this conflict has become a routine feature for the area ever since 1989, and the bilateral delimitation commission and local NGOs are engaged in an ongoing effort to mitigate the tension, so far there is no official and decisive resolution of this cross-border conflict.

The situation regarding the **refugee camp** in Suzak rayon as described in the previous Bulletin remained unchanged. The results of the study performed by joint commission are expected to be published. Procuror Azimbek Beknazarov, on a press conference in Bishkek on July 7 stated again in case of confirmation of criminals among the refugees from Uzbekistan, they would be handed over to Tashkent. This statement caused concern among both local human right activists and representatives of international organizations. During the past week no refugee has been handed over to the Uzbek authorities.

The **price of diesel fuel** steadily rose during the past 3 months: from April 2005 it was up 3 soms on average. Today a liter of diesel fuel costs 18 soms. After the March 24 events drivers asked the city officials to increase the passenger prices for mini-bus transport. In March Bishkek Auto Transportation Enterprise (БАТП in Russian) along with petroleum traders projected that the diesel fuel would cost as much as 21 soms a liter since most supplies are coming from Russia where fuel is more expensive than gas. The Agency turned to the Anti-monopoly Policies Department, however, the latter claimed that the price of transportation should actually have been less than even the current 5 soms. The current price of 5 soms was established in 1999 and has not been revised since. Drivers were outraged since 80-90% of them operate rented vehicles and have to personally cover all losses stemming from diesel fuel price augmentation. They repeatedly appealed to their management with requests. According to an interview with representatives of transport enterprises, drivers are ready for a strike similar to the case in April 8 which paralyzed public transportation.

Recommendations regarding border problems in Kara and Chekdobo village, Batken

Civil Society needs to initiate joint trust-building activities among the residents of these villages and their Tajik neighbors.

State structures should strive to complete the process of demarcation and delimitation.

International organizations can launch projects on building infrastructure for the joint use of the conflicting parties. It should be done in such a way that infrastructure would be available for both parties, not belonging to either side.

4. Conflicts and recommendations for their resolution

The situation around illegal land seizure in Bishkek

As reported earlier, on 1 July a two-day rally of land captors who demanded that plots of land be given to them for individual housing construction at Sovkhoz Dekorativnogo Khozyaistva in Bishkek city came to an end. According to mass media there were about 200 protesters involved, while officials from the city administration report no more than 50 protesters. The City Kenesh passed a resolution

that allows allocation of land in the Sovkhoz for individual residential construction in a procedure established by the law “with strict observation of the proper order”.

This event reminded Bishkek city and Chuy oblast residents of the unresolved issue of illegal land capture that started on April 7 on the southern outskirts of the city where a park area is located. The captured areas included arable lands of Sokuluk rayon, a sovkhov of decorative gardening and farming, and territory of the student campus of Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University. Land captors set tent cities in the area, and organized zoning and fencing. Such illegal capture of fertile land already took place in Kyrgyzstan in the early 90’s. According to data of the State Zoning and Property Right Registration Agency, today more than 100,000 people reside in such areas (up to 300,000 people according to other sources). The land captors united into “societies” and “groups” to collectively state their demands. For instance, the Yntymak Group numbers 4,500 people, the Kaarman Group numbers 12,500 people. They also created a Coordination Council that has a chairperson, deputy chairpersons and assistants. They hold weekly meetings. Land captors are also provided with tents and yurts.

Today mass gatherings of people disappeared from the territory in the vicinity of US Embassy and so-called “Southern Gates” (an area near the southern part of Bishkek) including even so-called “on-duty” captors. After law enforcement officers cleared out the territory near the Southern Gates from yurts and tents (this was triggered by the fact that captors went as far as commencing to lay foundation for future mosque), captors left the area including the territory near the US Embassy. Some captors stopped seizing land while others went to other areas of the city.

Earlier, in April, land captors were promised that the issue would be considered by July 10, 2005. A special governmental commission announced that 500 hectares would be allocated to them. The process of consideration of applications “in a procedure established by legislation with strict observation of the proper order” started. The land captors adopted a wait-and-see attitude and temporarily lost attention of the media. However, in light of the approaching deadline for consideration of allocation of land in Bishkek and Chui oblast set by the government, the situation became more tense. According to interviewed land captors, if their demands are not met after the Presidential Election in late July and early August, they plan to announce their rights on a wide scale and attempt to forcedly get the newly elected President to give them guarantees of transfer of land for individual residential housing construction. Indeed, according to preliminary lists composed by NGO activists prior to the captures, the number of people interested in receiving land in and outside of Bishkek was more than 21,000. Today, according to the monitoring data of Public Union “Kylym Shamy” the number of those who filed paperwork for issuance of land is about 40-45 thousand. At the same time, according to the head of Bishkek Public-State Department of Capital Construction “at most 10% of the claimants are entitled to land”. Of the remaining claimants, 30% of them are students, 30% are people from out-of-town. According to the law they cannot get land. Dyushenbek Abdyrasulov, chairman of the revision commission of the Coordination Council and authorized to distribute 262 hectares of municipal and oblast land, said “There is not enough land for all. We need at least 1.5 more hectares”. The government doesn’t have that much additional land resources in Bishkek. Today this issue can only be resolved by construction of high-storey apartment buildings. State officials continue finishing construction of unfinished residential buildings. In Bishkek alone, there are more than 50 such objects.

Land captors are quite knowledgeable about the real situation. According to the land captors, the land that the government guaranteed to allocate by July 10 will not be enough for all. By their estimations, only 2,000 people will get land while the number of land captors is at least 50,000 people. In addition, even the process of allocation of land to the first 2,000 people is being delayed – it’s been more than a month and a half already. “Today it’s been three months since we are here, sleeping in tents, many of us got sick, but we will not go away. We will stay till the end”, says Elmira, one of the land captors. We also learned that negotiations are undertaken between the captors and local authorities on sale of land at lowered prices (\$1,000 per 500 square meters). Self-evidently most of land claimants cannot afford such an offer.

As a result of interviews held, it became clear that land captors are well-organized and willing to undertake decisive actions. Both separate protests like the rally held before the City Kenesh on July, and protests by disappointed people frustrated by the long wait land are possible within the next 2 months. Most expected venues for such protests will be City Hall, House of Government and House of Jogorku Kenesh. Particular attention should be paid to the fact that in light of limited allocation of land, the unions of claimants may engage in open rivalry.

Recommendations:

For civil society: work with the land captors to identify ways to resolve the issue and prevent actions that may lead to violence.

For state structures: consider the issue of finishing 50 uncompleted high-storey apartment buildings in Bishkek. Consider the issue of allocating uncultivated lands in other oblasts of the country to the land claimants.

5. Announcements

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Prevention Database: The Early Warning for Violence Prevention Project appeals to organizations and individuals interested in organizing conflict mitigation activities to register in the Project database. The database will allow us to promptly engage you in the development and implementation of violence prevention measures.

Crisis Emergency Fund: The Early Warning for Violence Prevention Project is also announcing a small grant program intended for implementation conflict and violence prevention measures.

For more information about the Database and Emergency Fund please contact Violetta Yan at: 264/27 Manaschi Sagynbaya, phone: 996 (312) 64-43-60, 64-46-58, fax: 996 (312) 64-44-63, e-mail: fti@infotel.kg

About the Project:

The Early Warning for Violence Prevention Project was initiated by the Foundation for Tolerance International (FTI) and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) to prevent violence related to political conflicts by creating a mechanism of forecasting/investigating conflicts and

implementing appropriate preventive measures. The project is funded by OSCE and UNDP, and the Swiss and US governments.

In order to closely monitor the situation in the country, the Project created a national network of monitors selected among active members of the civil society and representatives of academic circles, media and law enforcement agencies. Overall, 36 monitors observe the situation throughout the country and maintain permanent communication with the Center for Early Warning (CEW).

CEW processes the information collected, prepares recommendations on interventions needed for violence prevention, and publishes a Weekly Bulletin.

The Early Intervention Component develops and implements action plans aimed at prevention of violence in close collaboration with governmental bodies, NGOs and international organizations. The Project also offers small grants for implementation of violence prevention measures.