



United Nations Human Rights Council
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Member State Kyrgyzstan

Submission of Jubilee Campaign USA, Inc.

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Jubilee Campaign promotes the human rights and religious liberty of ethnic and religious minorities; advocates the release of prisoners of conscience; and protects and promotes the freedom and safety of children from bodily harm and sexual exploitation.

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Universal Periodic Review of Member-State Kyrgyzstan

Jubilee Campaign USA, Inc., in special consultative status with ECOSOC, submits this analysis of religious freedom and human rights in Kyrgyzstan as a contribution to the Universal Periodic Review of UNHRC member-state Kyrgyzstan.

Freedom of Religion

1. Kyrgyzstan government has set the positive goal to combat violence associated with religious extremism, however, the laws put in place to reach this goal tread too heavily on the freedom of religion.
2. In January, 2009, President Bakiev signed a decree that put into force legislation which severely restricts the freedom of religion. Provisions in this law impose unjust restrictions on the registration of religious organizations and create obstacles that in effect prohibit registration all together for some groups. The law also restricts the distribution of religious materials.¹
3. One of the provisions of the new law requires “that a religious organization have 200 members before it can operate legally.” This is an enormous increase from the 10 members previously required.²
4. Further, the intent of the government to combat Islamic extremists has caused discrimination and persecution against Islamic groups including the banned Islamist party Hizb-ut-Tahrir.³
5. Jubilee Campaign calls on the government of Kyrgyzstan to denounce it’s restrictive laws which require high numbers to register religious groups as this violates the freedom to practice one’s religion.
6. Jubilee Campaign further calls the government to practice non-discrimination among religious groups, allowing each to practice and proclaim his faith without prejudice.

Freedom of Assembly

¹ Statement from the U.S. Mission to the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe, *available at* http://osce.usmission.gov/media/pdfs/2009-statements/st_012209_kyrgyzstan.pdf [accessed 1 November 2009].

² United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, *Central Asia: Kyrgyz Draft Law, Like Others in Region, Will Restrict Freedom of Religion*, <www.uscirf.gov>, Posted 19 November 2008.

³ Amnesty International, *Report 2009: Kyrgyzstan*, *available at* <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/kyrgyzstan/report-2009> [accessed 1 November 2009].

1. New amendments create heavy restrictions on the freedom of assembly by banning demonstrators from protesting around government buildings. It is now also necessary for demonstrators to get government approval for all demonstrations regardless of size.⁴
2. In 2008, residents in Nookat protested in front of the mayor's office that the stadium that had been designated for their celebration of the end of Ramadan had been closed to them. It is reported that almost one thousand people went to protest in front of the mayor's office. Officials arrested 32 people as a result of the protests, which were not intended to be violent. All of those arrested were members of Hizb ut-Tahrir. Since the arrests, detainees have reported of mistreatment and torture while in custody. The prisoners have been sentenced to between nine and 20 years.⁵
3. The government of Kyrgyzstan must lift restrictions on the freedom of assembly and allow for peaceful demonstrations without violence.
4. The government must release those who have been arbitrarily detained for petitioning the government.

Freedom of the Press

1. On 14 June 2008, Kyrgyz officials raided the offices of the independent newspaper "De Facto." Computers and documents were confiscated.⁶
2. Since Bakiev's presidency many attempts have been made to silence journalists seeking to create a public broadcaster to take the place of the state run media.⁷
3. Journalists who speak out against the government are in serious danger. In July 2009, Mr. Almaz Tashiev went to the police station in Zhany-Bazar village to obtain a new passport and was severely beaten by eight policemen. On 12 July, he died in the hospital due to his injuries. One policeman was charged with "abuse of power," however, it seems that the group is receiving impunity. Mr. Tashiev was an independent journalist who criticized the government.⁸

⁴ Radio Free Europe, *Kyrgyzstan Tightens Rules on Public Assembly*, <www.rferl.org>, Posted 6 August 2008.

⁵ Human Rights Watch, *Kyrgyzstan: Investigate Torture Allegation*, <www.hrw.org>, Posted 13 May 2009.

⁶ Radio Free Europe, *Rights Groups Assail Restrictive New Media Law*, <www.rferl.org>, Posted 17 January 2008.

⁷ Institute for War and Peace Reporting, *Kyrgyz Leader Edges Towards Reform*, 14 October 2009, RCA No. 591, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4ad82ba35.html> [accessed 1 November 2009].

⁸ World Organization Against Torture, *Death Following Beatings*, <www.omct.org>, Posted 22 July 2009.

4. The violent acts against journalists in Kyrgyzstan constitute grave violations of human rights and Jubilee Campaign calls on the government to allow for freedom of expression for all citizens, including journalists.

Rights of Women

1. Though laws are in place to protect women from domestic violence, the Kyrgyzstan officials do little to enforce these laws and women are reportedly abused by their husbands.⁹
2. Though the tradition of “bride kidnapping” is illegal according to Kyrgyz law, it is estimated that around 30 percent of marriages are the result of bride kidnapping. Women are not given freedom to choose who they marry and worse, they are often severely hurt during the kidnapping process and horribly abused and isolated in the home.¹⁰
3. Human Rights Watch reported that “[a] 38-year-old woman, “Elmira E.” . . . [was] beaten by her husband for years and hospitalized, once for a knife wound and another time for a concussion after he kicked her in the head. ‘The situation was so bad that I thought it would be better if he killed me,’ she said. Women suffer serious and permanent injury from domestic violence, and many are emotionally traumatized by the abuse, even years later.”¹¹
4. Jubilee Campaign implores the government of Kyrgyzstan to enforce the laws which are in place to protect women and to prosecute those who violate women’s rights.
5. The government must protect its people from the oppression and physical abuse being perpetrated on women against their will.

Summary of Recommendations

1. Jubilee Campaign calls on the government of Kyrgyzstan to denounce it’s restrictive laws which require high numbers to register religious groups as this violates the freedom to practice one’s religion.

⁹ Human Rights Watch, *Kyrgyzstan: Bride-Kidnapping, Domestic Abuse Rampant* , <www.hrw.org>, Posted 26 September 2006.

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2009 - Kyrgyzstan*, 14 January 2009, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/49705f9a5a.html> [accessed 1 November 2009].

¹¹ Human Rights Watch, *Kyrgyzstan: Bride-Kidnapping, Domestic Abuse Rampant* , <www.hrw.org>, Posted 26 September 2006.

2. Jubilee Campaign further calls the government to practice non-discrimination among religious groups, allowing each to practice and proclaim his faith without prejudice.
3. The government of Kyrgyzstan must lift restrictions on the freedom of assembly and allow for peaceful demonstrations without violence.
4. The government must release those who have been arbitrarily detained for petitioning the government.
5. The violent acts against journalists in Kyrgyzstan constitute grave violations of human rights and Jubilee Campaign calls on the government to allow for freedom of expression for all citizens, including journalists.
6. Jubilee Campaign implores the government of Kyrgyzstan to enforce the laws which are in place to protect women and to prosecute those who violate women's rights.
7. The government must protect its people from the oppression and physical abuse being perpetrated on women against their will.