

No wonder protesting moods in Kazakhstan have taken place during the shift of power in the country. Young people have felt the possibility of social and political changes after the resignation of president Nazarbayev, experts said.

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A 22-year-old student based in Almaty, Daniyar Khasenov, is a co-author of the open letter to the president of the European Council Donald Tusk, who was on a visit to Kazakhstan in late May. In the letter activists ask to release political prisoners and pay attention to the pressure exerted on the civil society. Later on, in his Facebook account, he wrote that his parents had been threatened with dismissal for his civil stance.

“My parents were threatened with dismissal, criminal prosecution against them and me. They threatened they wouldn’t issue my diploma, ban me from leaving the country, list me as an extremist and long-term imprisonment. They demanded that they talk to me and that I stay away from the situation and keep silent,” he posted and noted they had recommended him to leave the city on June 8-10 and not to attend the election.

Protesting moods started in Kazakhstan this February following the death of five children who lived with their parents in a small temporary construction in fire in Astana. Mothers of many children started then to attend rallies across the country, and they were impossible to ignore or detain. Now another part of the society, the young people, has picked up the slack and expressed their protest.

During the April annual race Almaty Marathon, young activists Asiya Tulesova and Beibarys Tolymbekov took to the streets holding a banner “You cannot run from the truth [in Russian] [#adilsailayushin](#) [#уменьяествьвыбор](#)»[I have a choice]. The court sentenced them to 15 days in prison for violating the peaceful assembly rule.

Protesters and even journalists covering such campaign have been arrested before, however the case of Tulesova and Tolymbekov has attracted attention of many social media users of Kazakhstan for the first time and consolidated them around the idea of free election.

See also: [Kazakhstan: From a Marathon Banner to Protest Consolidation](#)

The idea suggested by the activists has been supported by other young people, who held single protests in solidarity, bearing banners with excerpts from the constitution or totally blank. Police officers who filled such large cities as Almaty and Nur-Sultan detained the activists. Another method of isolation of activists, i.e. involuntary military conscription, emerged then.



Alimzhan Izbasarov. Photo: RFE/RL

A Nur-Sultan based civil activist, Alimzhan Izbasarov, participated in the peaceful protest for fair elections and release of political prisoners on May 1. Nearly 80 people were detained back then, three of them were brought to trial.

Izbasarov was detained and sentenced to 15 days in prison, and afterwards he received an enlistment notice. Young activists Beibarys Tolymbekov, Nur-Aslan Sagutdinov, Daniyar Khasenov and Berikbol Sadybai were drafted

into the army, too.

“The authorities hope they can decapitate a group of active civilians and expect activity decay after a year, especially during the election – when the young people are most active,” Izbasarov wrote in his Facebook account, which he uses actively to communicate with fellow-thinkers.

Despite the internet blocks in Kazakhstan in the last 2 years, activists use this social media to communicate with each other, make videos, post photos and support each other.

See also: [Detentions and Blocks in Kazakhstan: What Will Tokayev Do Next?](#)



Photo courtesy of Asem Zhapsheva. Facebook account

Longing for changes

No wonder protesting moods in Kazakhstan have taken place during the shift of power in the country. According to **Andrei Chebotarev**, some Kazakhstanis, particularly young people, have felt the possibility of social and political changes after the resignation of president Nazarbayev.



Andrei Chebotarev. Photo: sputniknews.kz

“The trend for renewal has been set. However, people see that the system has not changed yet and the situation is still under control of the authorities. The authorities have not announced any serious political changes. Therefore, the society fears that everything will remain as it is now despite the change of the head of state,” political analyst said.

He also noted that the majority doesn’t support such moods. The mainstream population focuses on stability, after all, and on certain reforms without serious commotions. Few people request profound changes.

According to mother of many children and activist based in Almaty, **Irina Kim**, who participated in the protests of mothers of many children this February, civil activity in the society emerged because it was badly needed.

“People are usually dissatisfied with the widespread corruption in all branches of power.

The February protest of mothers of many children across the country was caused by the improper policy of the authorities in the social sphere. Amid these events, other people who implement their political ambitions, remote from the government funds, etc. have become active,” she said.

According to Kim, a new civil activity in Kazakhstan can be explained by the advancement and fearlessness of young people unlike the older generation. However, the measures taken by the police against the activists show a low level of professionalism due to corrupt practices.

“There are worthy police officers who sacrifice their life to maintain order, but the administration is not ready to such campaigns. They treat all alike. Civil activity is often confused with extremism. They put pressure even on us, mothers of many children. We have just affected corrupt officials who find it detrimental that we have raised a bunch of actual problems,” Kim said.

See also: [What Kazakhstan Will Be like After Presidential Election?](#)

According to Chebotarev, repressive methods applied by the law enforcement system are caused by the stagnancy of the authorities, so this time all security agencies are set ready.

“Now the ruling establishment aims to maintain their assets and status quo, but shows fears and uncertainty. Therefore, every protest, even the smallest, encounters hard-line response. They expect no one would act the same in future. Moreover, the presidential election is forthcoming and we don’t know how the wide public would respond to its results,” political analyst said.

According to him, of all seven candidates for the presidency in Kazakhstan only opposition politician Amirzhan Kosanov may make civil society rise.

“However, his team and he should benefit from the situation to continue his political activity and to possibly move to the next level. Otherwise, participation of Kosanov in presidential

election will be in vain. First of all, they have a good opportunity to form their party and to participate in the parliamentary and local elections scheduled for 2021," Chebotarev said.

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