

Half a million votes for an opposition candidate must move the authorities in Nur-Sultan to defer to the protesters' opinion, according to analysts.

---

Follow us on [LinkedIn!](#)

---

### [Русский](#)

**Authors: Natalia Lee, Timur Toktonaliev in Bishkek, Assem Zhapisheva and Asel Shabdanova in Almaty**

The incumbent president of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev won the presidential election, according to preliminary results, with 70.76 per cent of the vote. Nearly 6.5 million Kazakhstanis voted for the ruling party's candidate. Oppositionist Amirzhan Kossanov, supported by 16.02 per cent or almost 1.5 million citizens, follows far behind at second place. Daniya Yespayeva, the only woman among candidates, wins the third place with 5.2 per cent.

```
!function(){“use strict”;window.addEventListener(“message”,function(a){if(void 0!==a.data[“datawrapper-height”])for(var e in a.data[“datawrapper-height”]){var t=document.getElementById(“datawrapper-chart-“+e)||document.querySelector(“iframe[src*='“+e+”']”);t&&(t.style.height=a.data[“datawrapper-height”][e]+“px”)}})}();
```

This distribution of votes is rather irrelevant to Kazakhstan. At previous presidential election, Nursultan Nazarbayev won 97.75 per cent of the vote, while the voting turnout was a record, 95.22 per cent. This time the number of voting Kazakhstanis was much more modest, 77.4 per cent.

“Tokayev and Nazarbayev are absolutely different figures, and Tokayev surely cannot have the same level of support and trust as Nazarbayev used to have. He has a rather different historic mission, different political weight, different level of recognisability. It's been his first experience in presidential run now, so it would be naïve to expect high voting percentage [80-90 per cent],” political analyst **Talgat Kaliev** said to CABAR.asia.



*Amirzhan Kossanov votes during the presidential election in Kazakhstan. Photo: informburo.kz*

### **A rehearsal for the opposition?**

“Those voters who disagree with the current political status quo have deemed Amirzhan Kossanov, a candidate of the national patriotic movement Ult Tagdyry (People’s Fate), as a candidate “against everyone” and voted not so much for him as against the system,” a Nur-Sultan-based analyst Anuar Temirov said.

“These votes have been definitely not for Kossanov. Hypothetically, they have been against Tokayev, they manifest the level of protest and distrust of the authorities, and possibly the need for change,” political analyst Kaliev said.

According to him, people want, first of all, to have their socioeconomic status improved (affordable housing, benefits), and the disappointed young people want transparent social elevators.

Some Kazakhstanis who voted for Kossanov also confirmed this.

“I voted for Kossanov just to be against Tokayev. [...] This election is a kind of workout, a shakedown to start changing the living standards in our country,” Tamilya Anchutkina, an Almaty resident, said.

This election is also a kind of shakedown for oppositionists in terms of forthcoming

parliamentary election, according to political analysts. The election is expected in 2021 in Kazakhstan, but it was a snap election two last times. The legislative authority is expected to change as the new president came to power.

Some think the presidential election became a good start for the opposition, mainly the movement Ult Tagdyry (People's Fate), to run for Mazhilis.

"The opposition's main target was not to win the election or counter the authorities in power of Kazakhstan. The primary reason was to secure presence and seats in the national parliament," analyst Askar Mukashev said.

Political analyst Kaliev said the lack of coordination between the Kazakhstan opposition made it impossible for Kossanov to win more votes.

"I hope Kossanov will manage to institutionalise this process, consolidate a mass of disappointed people, create a good quality party, enter the parliament and become one of the influential political forces," political analyst Talgat Kaliev said.

### **Conclusions by Tokayev**

The voting day in Almaty and Nur-Sultan was followed by rallies of hundreds of protesters who called for boycotting the election. According to official data, nearly 500 protesters were detained in both cities.

One of protesters said he had joined the rally to express his public stance.

"When clashes started, I tried to free up a girl who was taken away by a police officer, and then 3-4 police officers attacked me, twisted my arms back and forced me into a Gazel. Other people and I managed to get out from it, but we were caught again," a young man said.

According to him, they were charged with participation in an unsanctioned rally after detention.

"Almost all of detained were just like me, ordinary citizens who disagree with the current authorities. We spent more than 12 hours there, talked and discussed the street rallies, we were questioned in turns, and our mobile phones were carefully checked."

George Tsereteli, leader of the OSCE short-term observer mission, expressed his concern about this and warned that mass arrests in Kazakhstan on a voting day "might negatively affect the country's reputation."

The OSCE election observation mission said that election "took place in a political environment dominated by the ruling party and that limited critical voices."

"While there was potential for Kazakhstan's early presidential election to become a force for political change, a lack of regard for fundamental rights, including detentions of peaceful protestors, and widespread voting irregularities on election day, showed scant respect for democratic standards," according to the international observers' statement.

"I am planning to establish a special committee on social conflicts to give an opportunity to all the young people, who, as you said, represent a creative movement, to become a part of

the committee and could express their views,” president of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev answered the questions of journalists after the election.



*Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev votes during the presidential election in Kazakhstan. Photo: akorda.kz*

According to independent analyst based in Nur-Sultan, Askar Mukashev, the election showed deficiencies and the inability of political management to work with people, which would be a lesson for the future.

“The new administration will strengthen its work towards reduction of social tension among the Kazakhstanis: issues of the low-income people and large families, fight against corruption, improvement of economic indicators, quality of educational and medical services. In short, the initial task is domestic policy,” Mukashev said.

According to Talgat Kaliev, Tokayev will draw conclusions based on the number of those who voted for Kossanov and the moods of protesters, and certain changes may be expected in the country’s domestic policy.

“I think there will be certainly the circulation of elites because the rallies of so many disappointed people have shown that something needs to be changed, efficiency should be improved, some new economic paradigms should be made up, new jobs should be created, efficient programmes should be launched. Therefore, we need smart personnel with fresh thinking, who is able to work in a new way,” Kaliev said.

---

**CABAR.asia: To what extent will Nazarbayev allow this to happen?**



Talgat Kaliev. Photo: elorda.info

**Talgat Kaliev:** Nazarbayev has stepped down and is trying his best not to interfere with his successor's affairs. I think he would give him more and more independence every time. [...] Controls he has today are more like a safety lock against fatal errors.

**CABAR.asia:** However, some of your colleagues say Nazarbayev is preparing his daughter Dariga for the presidency, to maintain his property, and he doesn't need any changes...

**Talgat Kaliev:** Nazarbayev is quite a realistic man to understand that today no one can win only because they are someone's daughter or son. If Dariga ran for the election someday, she would have to pass through a great selection and competition, which wouldn't secure her victory.

**CABAR.asia:** What will the political situation be like in the forthcoming years then?

**Talgat Kaliev:** There would be a balance of forces. Today president doesn't have such power as Nazarbayev, in terms of both constitution and influence. We've had a constitutional reform in the last two years, which has conferred powers both upon the parliament and upon the government. However, neither the government, nor the parliament managed to assume these powers to the utmost as Nazarbayev dominated over them too much.

In this situation, Tokayev will need to work in the check-and-balance system and all these institutions will start working in full and gain momentum. In this regard, today it's illogical for Dariga Nazarbayeva to move from her comfortable position of the chair of the Senate - an influential post with the authority to control the executive branch - to a new position with a high level of vulnerability.

**CABAR.asia:** Once there's a balance of forces, there can always be disputes, misunderstanding, and political turmoil..

**Talgat Kaliev:** I hope we won't have misunderstanding or disputes, but political rivalry, project competition, which will contribute to the improved efficiency of all these systems in future.

### **Infractions during election**

According to the Central Election Commission, they have registered 16 reports of infractions - facts of voter impersonation, cases have been initiated against the members of the commission on a charge of casting a few ballots to one person. However, according to CEC, no mass infractions, which could influence the election results, have been reported. "It's a good news that the authorities, for the first time ever, have officially recognised infractions at some polling stations and provided feedback on illegal actions during the election," analyst Mukashev said.

International observers reported that officials had instructed public sector employees and students to attend campaign events and vote for the current president.

"Such activities blurred the line between party and state and raised concerns about voters' ability to cast their vote freely," according to the statement of the OSCE observers.

After the exit poll results, which clearly demonstrated the victory of Tokayev, had been published, he delivered an address at his election headquarters.

"I am glad the election campaign was civilised and calm. In fact, it was a competition of election agendas. This suggests that the level of political culture in Kazakhstan has seriously increased. We have a lot of work ahead," Tokayev said.

---

*This article was prepared as part of the Giving Voice, Driving Change - from the Borderland to the Steppes Project implemented with the financial support of the Foreign Ministry of Norway. The opinions expressed in the article do not reflect the position of the editorial or donor.*



If you have found a spelling error, please, notify us by selecting that text and pressing *Ctrl+Enter*.