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**KAZAKHSTAN**

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## Highlights

A new terror plot was revealed by the Committee of National Security (CNS), with renegade opposition member and fugitive banker Mukhtar Ablyazov accused of ordering a payment of \$25,000 for three explosions designed to wreak havoc on 22 March during celebrations of the Nauryz spring holiday in Almaty. CNS representatives said they obtained this information from a contact who voluntarily turned himself in after one of Ablyazov's personal bodyguards approached him. The explosions were meant to destabilize the socio-political situation and were scheduled to take place early in the morning in a public park and at several intersections of Al-Farabi Street. Ablyazov's spokesman qualified these accusations as 'nonsense' and said that Nazarbayev's regime trumped up the charges to strip its rival of his assets and terminate his support for political opposition in Kazakhstan<sup>1</sup>. Ablyazov himself went missing after London's High Court issued a warrant for his arrest on 16 February 2012 after he was sentenced to 22 months in prison for contempt of court. In Kazakhstan he is accused of embezzling \$4.5 billion from BTA Bank during his tenure as Chairman of this entity.<sup>2</sup>

## Internal Affairs

Two prominent trials began in March 2012 in western Kazakhstan. In the first, 47 people have been accused of supporting Islamic radicalism and terrorist activities following two explosions on 31 October 2011 in Atyrau. In the second trial, which is still in progress in Aktau, 37 defendants are accused of arson and criminal activities during the bloody Zhanaozen events on 16 December 2011 when the eight-month oil workers' strike boiled over into civic unrest leaving at least 14 people dead<sup>3</sup>.

The two trials have different implications. The first was conducted in strict secrecy and little information has been made available concerning either the trial

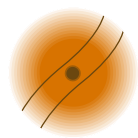
or the role played by each member of the alleged terrorist organization in orchestrating the explosions. The second trial has garnered a great deal of international attention, with multiple social and political repercussions.

In the first trial a verdict was reached regarding the two explosions on 31 October 2011 in Atyrau. The first bomb was planted in a garbage bin in the backyard of the regional municipal building (Oblast Akimat) and was detonated early in the morning before officials came to work, with no one hurt. The second bomb exploded in living quarters not far from various government buildings, among which the national security committee, killing Bauyrzhan Sultangaliyev, a 23-year-old suicide bomber and member of the radical Islamist group Jund Al-Khilafah (Soldiers of Khalifat) that has declared a holy war against Nazarbayev's regime<sup>4</sup>. Both explosions caused significant material damage with most of the windows in neighbouring buildings destroyed.

Many questions remain about the explosions and Jund al-Khilafah. The group first appeared on 21 October 2011 on SITE, a US intelligence monitoring website<sup>5</sup>, expressing dismay over the strict law on religious organizations and practices. The soldiers are said to be Kazakhstani nationals operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan<sup>6</sup>. It is not however clear whether Sultangaliyev acted alone or was actually a member of the alleged terrorist group. Since the media were unable to record or sit in on the trial, all that is known is that the sentence for 47 defendants ranged from 5-15 years in prison for those aged 22 to 32.<sup>7</sup>

The second trial in Aktau was public and attended by both international and local media. The government of Kazakhstan publicized this event extensively in the wake of the bloody events that took place in Zhanaozen on 16 December 2012 (Independence Day), shattering the country's stability. Aktau was looted and many government and private buildings destroyed (see November-December brief).

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Most importantly, for the first time since independence, local police forces opened fire on civilians killing at least 14 people. The trial in Aktau was organized to investigate the criminal activities of both the protestors and the law-enforcement bodies.

However, instead of investigating the criminal activities of 37 civilians, the trial revealed atrocities perpetrated by law-enforcement bodies during the Zhanaozen events and the utter disrespect of the police for investigative procedures. Most of the oil workers on trial said they were tortured and members of their families threatened. Three examples stand out. A high school student Nursultan Mukhashev was accused of crushing sound equipment on the performing stage of the central square in Zhanaozen. He confessed that investigator Maksat beat him during the interrogation until he signed confessions. No adults were admitted to the interrogation to assist Nursultan<sup>8</sup>. Another blatant procedural violation concerned Mels Saybayev, a security officer at AruAna hotel located near the square. On 20 December he was arrested in his apartment and charged with robbing an ATM machine at the hotel<sup>9</sup>. Police poked needles into his fingers and beat him and a plastic bag was put over his head to obtain a confession that he had seen how oil workers had robbed the hotel. He did not sign the papers, but his co-worker did and Mels is now on trial. The last highly publicized case concerned Aizhan Dyusenbayeva's family. Her father and brother, both oil workers, participated in the oil strike. On 16 December 2011 her father was arrested and later died during the interrogation process after being unable to survive torture in his prison cell. Police did not bother to call the ambulance, with the result that two police officers from that unit are on separate trial for violating their duties<sup>10</sup>. At the court hearing Aizhan testified that she was at the square<sup>11</sup> when a bullet hit her leg. She fell to the ground and, unable to walk, was carried out of the crossfire by a group of school children who saved her life. She saw a dead child lying on the square. In the emergency room she also saw many people who had died from their wounds. Police accused her of throwing stones at them and said they shot back in

self-defence<sup>12</sup>.

Ironically, the policemen responsible for torture are now witnesses in the same cases they themselves fabricated. Covered by article #100 of the Criminal Code that grants them witness protection, these officers are providing 'evidence' behind a screen or via Skype. Most of the defendants recognize their voices. When addressed by name, several officers confessed that they were given the text to read during the hearing and that they are deeply sorry for their actions.<sup>13</sup>

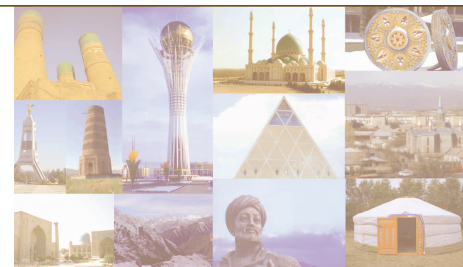
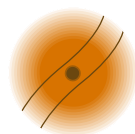
The Zhanaozen trial has multiple implications, among which the multiple arrests of innocent people and the arrests of several prominent opposition members who were actively involved in the strike. These developments effectively neutralized opposition and fostered authoritarianism in Kazakhstan. Kozlov, the head of the social movement Alga, was arrested on 23 January 2012 for inciting social hatred. Vinyavskii, the editor of the opposition newspaper Vzglyad, and social activist Serik Sapargali were also arrested on the same day, both accused of collaborating with Ablyazov who allegedly sponsored their political activities, all with the aim of destabilizing the political situation in Kazakhstan.

Several international organizations, including Human Rights Watch, urged the government to stop the trial and investigate cases of torture, but to no avail<sup>14</sup>. The trial continues.

## Foreign and international policy

On 12-18 April 2012 President Nazarbayev continued practicing his foreign policy goal of attracting 'resources for investments and technologies' (see previous brief) during his tour of Indonesia and Malaysia accompanied by several cabinet members. Judging from the results of the visit, the Kazakhstani delegation was out to attract manufacturing industries and non-commodity investors to participate in the country's domestic economy.

During the delegation's three-day visit to Indonesia, the two governments discussed bilateral trade and agreed to boost the volume of trade to \$100 million in the next five years<sup>15</sup>. To facilitate this goal and to



strengthen business partnerships and economic connections between the two states, the Intergovernmental Joint Economic Commission and Indonesia-Kazakhstan Business Council were set up. The visit concluded with several ministers and business representatives signing preliminary joint production agreements with strong manufacturing producers of internationally competitive finished goods. For example, representatives of the national wealth fund Samruk-Kazyna signed an agreement with PT Multistrada on establishing a \$100 million joint venture for the production of automobile tyres<sup>16</sup>. A similar deal was struck between Kazakhstani grain producer Bereket and Indofood, with the former supplying grain to Indonesia and Bereket setting up noodle production in Kazakhstan. In exchange, Kazakhstan reiterated its desire to review the opportunity of allowing the Indonesian National Oil and Gas Company Pertamina to own oil and gas deposits in Kazakhstan<sup>17</sup>.

During his visit to Malaysia, President Nazarbayev met with XIV Sultan Abdul Halim Muadzam Shah, current prime minister Abdul Razak and former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad<sup>18</sup>. Malaysia's successful transition to a highly industrialized state was of particular interest to President Nazarbayev, who openly declared that his delegation is interested in 'Malaysia's experience in petrochemistry, hydrocarbon refinement, industrial upgrade, creation of special industrial zones and economic corridors<sup>19</sup>.' Both sides are in favour of the creation of joint ventures in meat and flour industries based on Halal standards and financed by Islamic Banking. Allur Auto, a Kazakhstani company, explored an opportunity to launch the assembly of the Malaysian Proton car in Kazakhstan. Tourism, public hospitals and public transport projects may be introduced under the auspices of the industry and trade ministry. Bilateral trade between Kazakhstan and Malaysia presently stands at \$61 million with Kazakhstan importing electronics, iron and steel products and machinery, while exporting chemical products, iron and zinc<sup>20</sup>.

The active promotion of foreign policy based on the 'resources for investments and technologies' may succeed as the Kazakhstani economy attempts to reverse its dependence on oil and mineral revenues.

<sup>1</sup> Raushan Nurshaeva (2012), 'Kazakh Prosecutor says Almaty Bomb Plot Foiled', Reuters, March 28, 2012, available at [www.reuters.com/article/2012/03/28/kazakhstan-plot-idUSL6E8ES2B120120380](http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/03/28/kazakhstan-plot-idUSL6E8ES2B120120380), accessed on March 29, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> TengriNews.com (2012), 'Kazakhstan Averts Attacks Linked to Exiled Banker Ablyazov', TengriNews, March 28, 2012, available at [en.tengrinews.kz/crime/8704](http://en.tengrinews.kz/crime/8704), accessed on March 29, 2012

<sup>3</sup> Please see November-December brief

<sup>4</sup> Jamestown Foundation, 'Is Kazakhstan Threatened by Islamic Terrorists?' reprinted by UNHCR, November 11, 2011, available at [www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4ec24c32.html](http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4ec24c32.html), accessed on May 3, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Robin Paxton, 'Islamist Group Says Responsible for Kazakh Blasts', Reuters, November, 1, 2011, available at [www.reuters.com/article/2011/11/01/us-kazakhstan-blasts-idUSTRE7A027K20111101](http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/11/01/us-kazakhstan-blasts-idUSTRE7A027K20111101), accessed on May 3, 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Radio Free Europe, 'Mass Terrorism Trial Begins in Kazakhstan', March 26, 2012, available at [www.rferl.org/content/kazakh\\_mass\\_terror\\_trial/24527525.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/kazakh_mass_terror_trial/24527525.html), accessed on May 3, 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Joanna Lillis, 'Kazakhstan: Closed Terror Trial Ends with Long Prison Sentences', EurasiaNet.org, 19 April, 2012, available at [www.eurasianet.org/node/65293](http://www.eurasianet.org/node/65293), accessed on May 3, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Kazakhstan: Suspend Trial, Investigate Torture Allegations', published on April 23, 2012, available at [www.hrw.org/news/2012/04/23/kazakhstan-suspend-trial-investigate-torture-allegations](http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/04/23/kazakhstan-suspend-trial-investigate-torture-allegations), accessed on May 3, 2012. Also in Alla Zlobina and Sharipa Iskakova (2012), 'Aizhan Dusenbayeva: I Saw a Child that was Killed on the Square', Respublika, 27 April 2012, p. 6

<sup>9</sup> Alla Zlobina and Sharipa Iskakova (2012), 'Aizhan Dusenbayeva: I Saw a Child that was Killed on the Square', Respublika, 27 April 2012, p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Igor Larra, 'Black December: Investigation Continues', Svoboda Slova, April, 26, 2012, p.4

<sup>11</sup> Igor Larra, 'Black December: Investigation Continues', Svoboda Slova, April, 26, 2012, p.4

<sup>12</sup> Alla Zlobina and Sharipa Iskakova (2012), 'Aizhan Dyusenbayeva: I Saw a Child that was Killed on the Square', Respublika, 27 April 2012, p. 6 [www.reuters.com/article/2011/11/01/us-kazakhstan-blasts-idUSTRE7A027K20111101](http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/11/01/us-kazakhstan-blasts-idUSTRE7A027K20111101), accessed on May 3, 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Alla Zlobina and Sharipa Iskakova (2012), 'Aizhan Dyusenbayeva: I Saw a Child that was Killed on the Square', Respublika, 27 April 2012, page 7

<sup>14</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Kazakhstan: Suspend Trial, Investigate Torture Allegations', published on April 23, 2012, available at [www.hrw.org/news/2012/04/23/kazakhstan-suspend-trial-investigate-torture-allegations](http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/04/23/kazakhstan-suspend-trial-investigate-torture-allegations), accessed on May 3, 2012.

<sup>15</sup> Bagus Saragih, 'Indonesia, Kazakhstan Agree to Boost Trade', Asia News Network, 14 April, 2012. Available at [sg.news.yahoo.com/Indonesia-kazakhstan-agree-boost-trade-071004967.html](http://sg.news.yahoo.com/Indonesia-kazakhstan-agree-boost-trade-071004967.html) and accessed on May 3, 2012.

<sup>16</sup> Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Malaysia, 'On 17-18 April, 2012 President of the Republic of Kazakhstan His Excellency Nursultan Nazarbayev Paid State Visit to Indonesia', 12 April, 2012. Available at [www.kazembassy.org.my/popup\\_news.asp?id=350](http://www.kazembassy.org.my/popup_news.asp?id=350) and accessed on May 3, 2012.

<sup>17</sup> Bagus Saragih, 'Indonesia, Kazakhstan Agree to Boost Trade', Asia News Network, 14 April, 2012. Available at [sg.news.yahoo.com/Indonesia-kazakhstan-agree-boost-trade-071004967.html](http://sg.news.yahoo.com/Indonesia-kazakhstan-agree-boost-trade-071004967.html) and accessed on May 3, 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Malaysia, 'On 17-18 April, 2012 President of the Republic of Kazakhstan His Excellency Nursultan Nazarbayev Paid State Visit to Malaysia', 18 April, 2012. Available at [www.kazembassy.org.my/popup\\_news.asp?id=352](http://www.kazembassy.org.my/popup_news.asp?id=352) and accessed on May 3, 2012.

<sup>19</sup> Vladimir Kuryatov, 'Astana – Kuala Lumpur: A Course for Innovations. President Nursultan Nazarbayev has paid a State Visit to Malaysia', Kazpravda, 20 April, 2012. Available at [www.kazpravda.kz/c/1334830694](http://www.kazpravda.kz/c/1334830694) and accessed on May 3, 2012.

<sup>20</sup> Malaysian Investment Development Authority, 'Malaysia and Kazakhstan Set for Greater Economic Ties', April 18, 2012, available at [www.mida.gov.my/env3/index.php?mact=News, cntnt01, detail, 0&contnt01arti\\_cleid=1591&cntnt01origid=144&cntnt01returnid=107](http://www.mida.gov.my/env3/index.php?mact=News, cntnt01, detail, 0&contnt01arti_cleid=1591&cntnt01origid=144&cntnt01returnid=107), accessed on May 3, 2012.

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