

URGENT ACTION

OPEN BORDERS TO REFUGEES FROM KYRGYZSTAN

Join Amnesty International's call to the governments of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan to open their borders to those fleeing violence in Southern Kyrgyzstan, and to ensure that refugees are offered protection and humanitarian assistance.

As many as 400,000 people are estimated to have been forced to flee their homes following the violence that erupted in Southern Kyrgyzstan on 10 June, which has claimed the lives of hundreds of people and left thousands injured. Outbreaks of violence have lessened over the past few days, but despite interim government statements that security forces have regained control, the situation remains extremely volatile and unstable.

Thousands of people, mostly women, children, and elderly people, have massed on the Kyrgyzstani side of the border with Uzbekistan, either hoping to cross or believing that their proximity to armed Uzbekistani border guards will offer some protection from the arson, beating, shooting and killing carried out by groups of armed men. International aid agencies started distributing water and flour to displaced people along the border on Friday 18 June. However, humanitarian access to the most affected regions in the south continues to be limited. Eyewitnesses report that the conditions are harsh and there are concerns for the safety, as well as the physical and psychological health of those along the Kyrgyzstani side of the border.

About 100,000 people, mainly of Uzbek origin, have already sought refuge in Uzbekistan. However, on 14 June, Uzbekistan ordered its borders to be closed. Some refugees are reportedly occasionally allowed to cross the border, under certain conditions such as if they are of Uzbek ethnic origin or are residents in Osh or Jalal-Abad. On 18 June, Kazakhstan closed its borders to all ethnic Uzbeks from Kyrgyzstan.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English, Russian or your own language:

- Urging the authorities of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan to immediately open their borders to all those fleeing the violence in Kyrgyzstan;
- Urging them to cooperate with UN agencies and international bodies to ensure the protection of refugees and provide unhindered and unconditional access to immediate assistance to all those fleeing Kyrgyzstan, including those still waiting to leave, in accordance with international human rights standards;
- Urging them to cooperate with UN agencies and international bodies to ensure and facilitate the provision of humanitarian aid, including shelter, food, water and medical assistance, and to permit the UNHCR to take over the registration of refugees.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 3 AUGUST 2010 TO:

President of Uzbekistan
 President Islam Karimov
 Presidential Residence
 Ul. Uzbekistanskaya 43
 Tashkent
 UZBEKISTAN
 Email: presidents_office@press-service.uz
 Fax: +998 71 139 55 25
Salutation: Dear President

President of Kazakhstan
 President Nursultan Nazarbayev
 Ul. Levoberezhie
 Astana 010000
 KAZAKHSTAN
 Email: sitePRK@global.kz
Salutation: Dear President

President of Tajikistan
 President Emomali Rakhmon
 Dom Pravitelstva
 pr. Rudaki 80
 734023 Dushanbe
 TAJIKISTAN
 Fax: +992 372 2273802 (GMT+6 and functions during office hours)
Salutation: Dear President

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The deadly violence which has devastated large parts of the south of Kyrgyzstan is said to have started on 10 June with clashes between rival gangs of mostly Kyrgyz and Uzbek youths, which rapidly escalated into large-scale arson, looting and violent attacks, including killings, on mainly Uzbek-populated districts in Osh. Subsequently, the violence spread to the city of Jalal-Abad and surrounding towns and villages. The south of Kyrgyzstan is home to a large ethnic Uzbek community and was the power base of former president Kurmanbek Bakiev, who was overthrown in April after a violent confrontation between government and opposition supporters.

While the cause of the clashes is unclear, the interim government has blamed the violence on supporters of former President Kurmanbek Bakiev and on organized criminal groups intent on destabilizing the situation in the country ahead of a referendum on a new constitution on 27 June. Parliamentary elections are also planned for October. On 15 June, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights stated that the violence appeared to be "orchestrated, targeted and well-planned" and that it was set off by five simultaneous attacks by armed masked men in the city of Osh.

Unconfirmed figures suggest that over 2,500 have been killed in the cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad since 10 June. The interim President Roza Otunbaeva said on 18 June that the death toll was likely to be 10 times higher than the official figures which gave it as 190 dead. Many homes, public buildings and other property, in particular Uzbek neighbourhoods, have been destroyed in the cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad and towns and villages in the region with large Uzbek populations.

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