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Authorities in Kyrgyzstan must refrain from unlawful use of force

Amnesty International is calling on the authorities in Kyrgyzstan not to use excessive force in their attempts to end protests in the capital Bishkek and other cities that have reportedly left 17 people dead and many more injured.

Demonstrators calling for the resignation of President Kurmanbek Bakyev over rising prices reportedly seized weapons from the police which led to violent confrontations.

“The authorities have the right and the responsibility to protect the lives and safety of the public, but they must not use excessive force. The use of force is legitimate only where it is strictly necessary and proportionate,” said Andrea Huber, Europe and Central Asia Deputy Programme Director.

Tensions between the government and the opposition have escalated in recent weeks and erupted on 6 April in the city of Talas, following the arrest of an opposition leader who was later released.

Growing discontent among the population caused by rising prices in heating fuel and electricity prompted the opposition to call for nationwide protests to be held on 7 April should the government not meet a list of demands.

A state of emergency has been declared by the President, Kurmanbek Bakyev, and several opposition figures, who had called for the demonstrations, have been arrested and accused of organizing the riots.

Amnesty International is concerned that members of the opposition may have been arrested arbitrarily and that they may face torture or ill-treatment in detention.

“The Kyrgyz authorities should bear in mind that human rights cannot be trampled on even in a state of emergency,” Andrea Huber said.

“The unrest must not be used as a pretext to further restrict freedom of assembly and freedom of expression.”