

# Protests rise against repression in Kazakhstan

*An uprising has begun in Kazakhstan but has been met by brutal repression and a Russian intervention. [ecosocialist.scot](https://ecosocialist.scot) condemns the repression and supports the uprising. We reproduce statements from Russia, Kazakhstan and a report on London protests. Further coverage to come.*

## For a democratic and socialist Kazakhstan! Stop the intervention, release the detainees! Statement of the [Russian Socialist Movement](#)

*Mass protests have been going on in Kazakhstan for several days. The detonator of the uprising was the rise in prices for liquefied gas, but it is obvious that the contradictions, which eventually led to a social explosion, accumulated in Kazakhstan for years.*

*At the moment, the protesters are forming their own self-governing bodies, in some cities administrative buildings and offices of law enforcement agencies have been taken by storm.*

*Despite the fact that the country's nominal president, Kosym-Zharmat Tokayev, tried to calm the people down by freezing gas prices and the resignation of the government, the protests only intensified and entered a new phase, which speaks of deep-rooted discontent with authoritarian-bureaucratic capitalism in Kazakhstan.*

*The vanguard of the protest is the working class, and we are convinced that only it will be able to carry through to the*

*end the democratic transformations, without which the struggle for freedom, democracy and socialism is impossible. Only the working people and all the progressive forces of Kazakhstan will be able to bring the revolution to its goal, without looking back at the lulling speeches of the government and not handing over the fate of the protest into the hands of “democratic” opposition politicians.*

*We stand in solidarity with the insurgent people of Kazakhstan, demanding:*

- *Immediately release all detained protesters and political prisoners.*
- *Stop the military intervention of the CSTO member states.*

*We call on the Kazakh left to participate in the protests and defense of Kazakhstan against military incursion. Introduce a socialist agenda into the program of the insurgent people of Kazakhstan and build their own independent political organization.*

*The statement was signed by:*

- *Russian Socialist Movement,*
- *Executive Committee of the movement “Labor Russia”,*
- *Altleft.org website editorial office,*
- *Interregional Coalition of Left Forces “Left Bloc”,*
- *Marxist Tendency.*

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<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article7469=>

# Statement of the Socialist Movement of Kazakhstan

*In Kazakhstan, there is now a real popular uprising. From the very beginning the protests were of a social and class nature, as the doubling of the price of liquefied gas on the stock exchange was only the last straw in the overflowing cup of patience. After all, the protests began in Zhanaozen on the initiative of oil workers, which became a kind of political headquarters for the entire protest movement.*

*The dynamics of this movement are indicative as it started as a social protest, but then it began to expand, and the labour collectives used the meetings to put forward their demands for a wage increase of 100%, the cancellation of the results of optimisation, the improvement of labour conditions and freedom of trade union activity. As a result, as early as 3 January the entire Mangistau region was gripped by a general strike, which spilled over into the neighbouring Atyrau region.*

*As early as 4 January, oil workers at Tengizchevroil, where American companies have a 75% stake, went on strike. It was there that in December last year 40,000 workers were laid off and a new round of layoffs was planned. They were supported later in the day by oil workers of Aktobe and West Kazakhstan and Kyzylorda regions.*

*Moreover, in the evening of the same day, strikes of miners of Armel or Mittal Temirtau in Karaganda region and of copper smelters and miners of Kazakhmys corporation began what is essentially a general strike in the whole extractive industry of the country. There were also demands for higher wages, lowering of the retirement age, the right to trade unions and strikes.*

*Meanwhile, on Tuesday, open-ended strikes already started in*

Atyrau, Uralsk, Aktyubinsk, Kyzyl-Orda, Taraz, Taldykorgan, Turkestan, Shymkent, Ekibastuz, in towns of Almaty region and in Almaty itself, where barricading of streets during the night of 4-5 January led to the open clash of demonstrators with the police, as a result of which the city administration was temporarily seized. This gave Kassym-Jomart Tokayev grounds for declaring a state of emergency.

It should be noted that these demonstrations in Almaty were mainly composed of unemployed youth and internal migrants, living in the suburbs of the megalopolis and working in temporary or low-paid jobs. And attempts to placate them with promises to reduce gas price to 50 tenge, separately for the Mangistau region and Almaty have not satisfied anyone.

Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's decision to dismiss the government, and then to dismiss Nursultan Nazarbayev, the chairman of the Security Council, did not stop the protests either, as mass protest rallies began on 5 January in those regional centres of Northern and Eastern Kazakhstan, where there were none before – in Petropavlovsk, Pavlodar, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Semipalatinsk. At the same time, in Aktobe, Taldykorgan, Shymkent and Almaty, attempts were made to take the buildings of regional administrations by storm.

In Zhanaozen itself, the workers formulated new demands in their indefinite rally – the resignation of the current president and all Nazarbayev officials, the restoration of the 1993 Constitution and the related freedoms to create parties and trade unions, the release of political prisoners and the end of repression. The Council of Aksakals [Elders] was established as an informal governing body.

In this way, demands and slogans were transmitted to the entire movement, which are now used in various cities and regions, and the struggle was given a political content. There are also attempts on the ground to create committees and councils to coordinate the struggle.

At the same time, troops were brought to Almaty, Aktau and Zhanaozen. While in the Mangistau region, all passed peacefully, and the soldiers refused to disperse demonstrators, in the southern capital skirmishes began, and during the night of January 5 to 6 special forces were brought in to cleanse by force the airport and the neighbourhoods occupied by the insurgents. According to various reports, dozens of demonstrators have been killed.

In this situation there is a danger that all protests and strikes will be violently suppressed and the country must be completely paralysed by a general strike. It is therefore urgent to form united action committees along territorial and industrial lines to offer organized resistance to the military-police terror.

In this connection we also need the support of the entire international workers' and communist movement and left-wing associations, with the aim of organising a major campaign in the world.

The socialist movement in Kazakhstan demands:

An immediate cessation of hostilities against its people and the withdrawal of troops from the cities!

The immediate resignation of all Nazarbayev officials, including President Tokayev!

Release of all political prisoners and detainees!

Ensuring the right to form their own trade unions, political parties, and to hold strikes and meetings!

Legalisation of the activities of the banned Communist Party of Kazakhstan and the Socialist Movement of Kazakhstan!

We call on all workers and employees of the country to implement in practice the demand of the murdered oil workers of Zhanaozen – to nationalize, under the control of labour

collectives, all extractive and large-scale industry in the country!

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– [https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article7468=](https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article7468)

## Report of London Picket of Kazakhstan Embassy

*Around 50 people braved teeming rain and the challenges of travelling during the pandemic to protest against the barbarous actions of the Kazakh regime against its own people, writes Terry Conway.*

*Called by [AntiCapitalistResistance](#) (ACR) and supported by the [Ukraine Solidarity Campaign](#), [Labour Representation Committee](#) (LRC), [rs21](#), [Workers Power](#), [Socialist Alternative](#), [Workers Liberty](#) and a number of individual activists, people had been galvanised by the speed and depth of working class resistance to the major attacks on their living standards that the removal of the price cap on liquefied gas – and then outraged by the repression that followed.*

*Russia sent 2,500 troops into the country, on Thursday in response to an appeal from President Tokayev who was clearly worried he was losing control. The night before the rally, Tokayev ordered troops to shoot to kill protestors, who he has consistently labelled “outside agitators”. It is difficult to know how many have been murdered – even the BBC balks at using Tokayev’s term of “eliminated” without comment. Certainly thousands have been arrested.*

*Meanwhile China’s President Xi also expressed support for the*

regime. While the European Union is worried about Russian intervention, it makes little criticism of the Tokayev regime, seeming to blame the protestors for the violence.... UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet said: "People have the right to peaceful protest and freedom of expression. At the same time, protesters, no matter how angry or aggrieved they may be, should not resort to violence against others."

Biden and his team have made similar comments.

Britain is certainly not absent from this gang of thieves. Johnson has echoed the comments of other world leaders in recent days – not a surprise when he welcomed the Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov to London in late November, saying he looked forward to working with him on ["global security"](#).

And of course, as was pointed out at the protest, Tony Blair acted as advisor to former president Nursultan Nazarbayev, in power for more than three decades until 2019 and who still has a significant influence.







*The rally was chaired by the ACR's Simon Hannah who read part of the statement of the Kazakh Socialist Movement. Then we heard from Yuliya Yurchenko speaking on behalf of the Ukrainian Social Movement and Chris Ford from the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign who read messages from the Ukrainian Socialist League and from Ukrainian socialist writer and historian Marko Bojcun.*



*Other speakers were from Socialist Alternative, Pete Firmin from LRC, Steve McSweeney from Workers Power and journalist Paul Mason. Paul, as a member of the NUJ, sent particular solidarity to journalists in Kazakhstan, trying to disseminate news of the resistance under impossible conditions.*

*A police van arrived quite early on and spoke to the organisers but then moved back. During the speeches one of the protestors noticed the poster on the embassy window – Kazakhstan a great place to visit and amended it to Kazakhstan a great place to overthrow the president. Shortly afterwards*

*the police moved in and arrested the comrade and took him to Charing Cross police station, saying he would be charged with criminal damage.*



*This was despite the fact that others in the crowd removed the graffiti before he was taken away and took timed photographs to show no damage had in fact been done. A number of speakers made the point that the police were more concerned about protecting the property of a repressive murderous regime than respecting our democratic rights to protest. Such sentiments are undoubtedly bolstered by the Police bill wending its way through Westminster.*

*During the action at the embassy we heard that there was a gathering of the Kazakh community in Trafalgar Square and made our way to join them, The organisers who were clearly inexperienced, seemed nervous about being joined by the left, though they were happy to borrow our megaphone. Later John McDonnell MP who had been speaking at an event in another part of the square to mark the shameful 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of*

Guantanamo Bay came and addressed them so some links were made.

As Simon Pirani argues [here](#), the left needs to urgently discuss the most effective forms of solidarity we can develop with the people of Kazakhstan, of the other Eastern European countries and with those in Russia itself. The ACR is committed to being part of this process.

Thanks to Steve Eason for the photos.

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