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# Religious Freedom and Human Rights in Kazakhstan

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## Introduction

The Republic of Kazakhstan became an independent country on 16 December 1991. Territorially it is the ninth largest country in the world, but its population is comparatively small and ethnically diverse. Preliminary results of the census of 1999 reveal a population of something over 14,450,000 people, compared with 16,199,000 in 1989. Of these, 53.4 per cent are Kazakhs and 30 per cent Russians (Kazakhstanskaya, 2000b). The other main ethnic groups in Kazakhstan are Ukrainians, Germans, Uzbeks, Tatars, Uighurs and Koreans.

Like any other country, Kazakhstan has a distinctive religious character produced by historical, geographical, ethnic, political and other factors, which should be taken into consideration when analysing religious freedom and human rights as well as the status of religious organisations. Three important features of the religious character of Kazakhstan are as follows. First, religion has played an insignificant role in the country during various periods of its history, and this has resulted in the underdevelopment of religious institutions and of church-state relationships. Second, there is no one dominant religion, because the country has been a place of migration and deportation of many peoples with a variety of religious faiths. Third, the intensive struggle against religion during the Soviet period has produced a predominantly secularised society.

Largely because of its geographical location, Kazakhstan is often considered to be a Muslim country, or a country under strong Muslim influence. This is an inaccurate impression. Although Kazakhstan does indeed lie in the area of traditional Islamic influence, it is located far from major Muslim centres. Historically, Islam appeared and spread in the territory of Kazakhstan much later than in other Asian countries. In general, the Islamisation of the peoples of Central Asia was completed by the end of the eighth century, but the establishment of Islam as the main religion in Kazakhstan, especially in its northern regions, was not completed until the nineteenth century. The slow pace of this process can be explained by the remoteness of Kazakhstan from the Muslim centres and by its vast, thinly populated territory and the prevalent nomadic way of life of its population, which was incompatible with the establishment of centralised religious institutions. At different periods of history, tribes, dynasties and ethnic groups, confessing various pagan religions, Buddhism and Christianity, achieved temporary influence, and they helped to determine the religious atmosphere of the country.

In the first two decades of the twentieth century the territory of Kazakhstan

received a large number of Russians and Ukrainians rendered landless by tsarist agricultural policy.<sup>1</sup> During the Soviet period, in the context of large-scale governmental projects such as the development of the 'virgin lands' and the construction of giant factories, large numbers of people of various nationalities from all the other Soviet republics came to live in Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan was also the place of exile for certain nationalities deported by Stalin (Germans, Chechens, Ingush, Koreans), and the location of penal labour colonies.<sup>2</sup>

An ethnically diverse population, as well as state indifference and indeed hostility to religion in general, have made it impossible for any one religion to predominate in Kazakhstan. When estimates of the numbers of believers are made, very often the national affiliation of citizens is taken to indicate their religion. Thus all Kazakhs, Tatars and Uighurs, who make up the majority of the population of Kazakhstan, are often automatically considered to be Muslims. However, most of these people do not in fact regard themselves as orthodox Muslims; they may take part in various religious ceremonies, but they do not go to the mosque regularly.<sup>3</sup> During the Soviet period Kazakhstan was remarkable for a great number of Protestant organisations and their influence.<sup>4</sup> In 1999, 6000 religious associations (registered or nonregistered) belonging to 49 denominations were operating in Kazakhstan (Ivanov and Trofimov, 1999, p. 5).

Despite the fact that it is still hard to speak of the dominant role of any religion, two religious organisations are now in fact coming to the fore: the Muslim and the Orthodox. Protestant organisations are still powerful: although their number and the influence of the ethnic Germans have diminished because of emigration,<sup>5</sup> a large number of Protestant missionaries, mainly from the USA and South Korea, have been active in Kazakhstan since the fall of communism.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, however, the general level of religiosity in Kazakhstan is rather low, to a large extent because of secularisation in the Soviet period.<sup>7</sup>

### **Religious Freedom in Kazakhstan During the Soviet Period**

The freedom of conscience proclaimed in the Soviet Constitution did not exist in practice. Believers and their associations were under total state control. Relations between the state and religious associations were established in compliance with the existing political and legal structures. Within the bounds of those structures, state interests prevailed over the interests of individuals.

During the Soviet period Kazakh legislation on religious cults, like similar legislation in the other Soviet republics, placed all kinds of restrictions on believers and their associations.<sup>8</sup> Religious activity was legal only if the religious association was registered with the state organs. Religious believers faced restrictions on higher education and a wide range of jobs and ran the risk of discriminatory treatment. A whole range of unpublished administrative orders imposed limits and duties on believers and their organisations. Nothing was said about believers' rights.

### **Religious Freedom after the Fall of Communism**

In newly independent Kazakhstan a new law 'Religious Freedom and Religious Associations' (*'O svobode veroispovedaniya i religioznykh ob"yedineniyakh'*) was passed in 1992 (Zakon, 1992). Believers and their associations (also translated as 'organisations') obtained unprecedented rights and freedoms. The relationship between religions and the state was totally changed: it was now based on partnership and

mutual understanding rather than on struggle between two social structures. Indeed, the state now admitted that religion was of great value to society. It gave up its total control in the religious sphere and acknowledged the necessity of securing religious freedoms and human rights. The number of religious associations began to increase. Some expropriated buildings and property were returned to the church. Believers and their organisations gained access to radio, television and other mass media. They began involving themselves in charitable, humanitarian and educational work. Foreign missionaries began to arrive. That period of time was characterised by a liberal attitude on the part of the state, which no longer attempted to control the religious situation. Believers and their associations enjoyed a large degree of independence.

### **Changing Attitudes to Religious Freedoms Today**

The period of liberalism lasted from 1990 to 1996. Unfortunately it did not lead to the full securing and developing of religious freedom, but gave place to attempts to strengthen the role of the state in regulating the activity of religious associations and limiting religious freedoms. There were several reasons for this development.

The two main religious organisations in Kazakhstan are the Muslim Spiritual Directorate (or Spiritual Board) (*Dukhovnoye Upravleniye*) and the Russian Orthodox Church, which has three dioceses, Astana-Almaty, Ural-Gur'yev and Shimkent-Akmola. Under the law these organisations are equal in status to other religious organisations, but in practice they enjoy many advantages which guarantee more loyalty to them on the part of the authorities, give them more opportunities for participating in major public, political and mass events, and facilitate the resolving of whatever problems may arise. These two main religious organisations have moved steadily closer to the state.<sup>9</sup> One of their main concerns is to try to influence the state's attitude toward new religious movements and traditional competitors in the religious sphere. The Muslim Spiritual Directorate is concerned about attempts by Christian organisations to proselytise the Kazakh population. The Russian Orthodox Church is also concerned about the growth of Protestant and other Christian organisations and about the intensive activity of foreign missionaries. Both Orthodox and Muslim authorities participated in drafting the articles in the Civil Code of 1994 and the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan of 1995 which place limitations on the activities of foreign missionaries.<sup>10</sup> They continually raise the question of adopting new legislation which would limit the activity of foreign missionaries and 'non-traditional' religious organisations. Amongst 'nontraditional' religious organisations they include some with deep historical roots in Kazakhstan, of which many are Protestant organisations.<sup>11</sup>

The concerns of the Muslim and Orthodox establishments are exacerbated by the fact that organisations such as the Church of Scientology and the Unification Church are now operating actively in Kazakhstan. In the opinion of the government, they are dangerous for society and should be prohibited or put under strict state control.

Another problem, which causes alarm among the state authorities and more widely among the population, is the threat of the spread of Islamic fundamentalism. Muslim missionaries from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, Libya and Iran are operating in Kazakhstan. Most of them are connected with Islamic organisations of a fundamentalist orientation. They organise communities, hold discussions with students, conduct religious seminars and send citizens to overseas religious centres to be educated. They are not subject to the Muslim Spiritual Directorate of Kazakhstan.

All these circumstances make the question of a more active role for the state with respect to believers and their associations a topical one. Suggestions are being made ever more frequently about creating favourable conditions for the traditional religions, while restricting nontraditional religions. The experiences of neighbouring countries, as well as other countries of the world, where such limitations exist are given as examples. One alarming feature of the debate is that no distinctions are made between socially dangerous associations that break the law and those that are simply competitors with the traditional religions.

In 1998–2001 there have been attempts to adopt restrictive amendments to the law. At the end of 2001 the president announced the amendments as an urgent draft law and in January 2002 both chambers of parliament adopted it. The new legislation provided for more restrictive registration procedures. The Muslim Spiritual Directorate would have powers approaching those of the state itself in that the creation of any new Muslim organisation and the erection of new buildings would need its approval. The liabilities of religious associations would be increased, while state control functions would be heightened. The activities of foreign religious associations in the Republic of Kazakhstan as well as the appointment of heads of religious associations in the republic by foreign religious centres would have to take place through a single republican religious centre for each confession, in coordination with appropriate state agencies. The president did not sign the new law, but sent it to the Constitutional Council. In 2002 the Constitutional Council found the new amendments unconstitutional. The main reason was the granting of state authority (approval for erection of new buildings and registration of new Muslim organisations) to a non-state structure (the Muslim Spiritual Directorate).

### **The Legal Status of Believers and Religious Organisations**

The secular authorities in Kazakhstan showed some interest in religion during the process of the collapse of the communist system, but soon a return to traditional indifference towards religion manifested itself. In the legislative field, this indifference has led to an absence of regulatory legal acts relating to matters of religion and shows itself in ignorance of the peculiarities of religious associations and believers on the part of those addressing social problems. Indifference on the part of the state can be beneficial for religion. At the same time, however, the lack of a legal framework means that the state can interfere arbitrarily in the activity of religious associations, frequently violating human rights.

Unlike some other postsoviet countries, for example Russia, Azerbaijan, Belarus', Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, where tougher laws have already been adopted, Kazakhstan is still formally a liberal country as far as religion is concerned. The Constitution of 1995 defines the Republic of Kazakhstan as a secular state. The Constitution does not pay much attention to matters relating to religion; they are mentioned in only a few articles. Thus Article 22 proclaims everyone's right to freedom of conscience. Article 5 forbids the activity of political parties on a religious basis and contains provisions relating to the activity of foreign religious organisations on the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan.<sup>12</sup>

The principles of interrelations between religions and the state, and the religious rights and freedoms of citizens, are fully formulated in the 1992 law 'Religious Freedom and Religious Associations'. All religious organisations are stated to be equal before the law. No religion enjoys any support or protection on the part of the state. Religious organisations are separate from the state and its system of education.

The state does not interfere in the activity of religious organisations. Religious organisations have similar legal status to other organisations in Kazakhstan. Citizens and their associations are granted numerous rights and freedoms. These are as follows:

1. Citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan and other countries, as well as individuals without citizenship, have the right to practise any religion of their choice, both on their own and together with others, or to practise no religion at all. Any kind of compulsion is prohibited, as far as choice of religious confession, participation in worship and religious rites and ceremonies, or obtaining religious education are concerned.
2. Citizens can satisfy their religious requirements both on their own or together with others, forming associations. It is important to note that the legislation does not stipulate compulsory registration of religious associations. A religious organisation is free to choose its own leaders and appoint its own clergy.
3. Citizens and their associations are free to arrange religious ceremonies and other religious events on their own premises and on the premises of other organisations such as prisons and hospitals, at the discretion of the administration. They may also rent buildings and premises; in such cases special permission from state officials is not necessary.
4. Citizens can raise and educate their children in accordance with their religious beliefs, both in religious educational institutions and at home.
5. Citizens are free to spread their doctrines in a variety of ways. There are some provisions in the law regarding the right of religious associations to use, publish and disseminate religious literature and other religious items. There is no special provision regarding preaching.
6. Believers and their associations also have the right to form associations for disseminating religious literature and for cultural, educational and charitable activities.

Despite the fact that all these freedoms are specified in legislation, however, they are very often not realised in practice. A mismatch between legislation and practice is quite common in Kazakhstan not only in the sphere of religious freedom, but in other spheres as well. This is partly due to the fact that society is lacking in experience and traditions of coexistence under conditions whereby both citizen and the state have equal rights and duties.

The legislation on religion presupposes cooperation between religious organisations and state bodies. Unfortunately, such interaction often results in substantial limitations on believers' rights. Let us take for example the question of registration. According to the legislation, religious organisations can decide whether they need to register with the state or not. They can exist and operate without being registered, but the status of a registered organisation gives them more opportunities: they obtain the status of a legal entity and can then purchase a building or open a bank account and so on. Thus registration under Kazakh legislation merely means that the state recognises a new status for a religious organisation. However, in practice, during the process of registration questions of expediency and the usefulness of this or that organisation come into consideration. The influence of the Soviet concept of registration is clear. Formally, the procedure for the registration of religious associations is the same as that for other organisations. There are no special rules regarding religious organisations. The procedure is fairly simple: it is necessary to obtain the consent of ten

individuals and to provide a number of documents. However, state administrative officials have the authority to refuse registration to any religious association. They can do this in various ways: for example, by revealing trifling errors in the documents submitted, by imposing their own ideas about the structure and administrative bodies of the religious association in question, or by sending documents for expert advice. Sometimes the registration bodies have unofficial instructions prohibiting the registration of some religious associations. In Kazakhstan there are instructions of this kind relating to the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Korean Protestant churches, some Muslim organisations not affiliated with the Muslim Spiritual Directorate of Kazakhstan, some Orthodox organisations not affiliated with the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) and some others. It should of course be borne in mind that the state authorities do realise that registration is useful not only for a religious association but also for the state itself, because it is easier to take control of a registered association than of a nonregistered one.

The conditions regarding registration were made stricter with the adoption of the new Administrative Violations Code (2001). Under Article 375 of that code religious leaders can be punished for avoiding registration. Many leaders of nonregistered groups have been penalised. The state bodies do not pay attention to the fact that there is in fact no legislation that makes registration obligatory. Officials also do not tend to take into consideration the fact that a religious organisation may not satisfy the formal requirements for registration: it may not have a sufficient number of members or sufficient funds, for example.

The realisation of any right granted by legislation can in fact be illegally limited in practice. The right to spread religious belief and to proselytise is frequently limited by local authorities to the region where the religious organisation is located and registered. Serious visa problems may arise when a religious organisation wants to bring in clergy from abroad.<sup>13</sup> Officials often insist that religious organisations can be set up only through organisations which have been founded by main religious centres. The autonomy of any religious organisation can come into conflict with attempts by the registration bodies to apply stereotyped patterns of rule for any kind of religious structure without considering canonical peculiarities and the right of believers freely to determine their own administrative system. Charitable, educational and humanitarian activity is often dependent on receiving numerous types of permission from the state bodies. In addition, there are no tax or customs concessions for such activity. The state does not feel compelled to share the burden of solving the grave social problems of Kazakhstan with non-state structures.

Unfortunately, despite the fact that their religious rights and freedoms are being violated, believers and their associations tend not to attempt to dispute the illegal actions of state bodies or to protect their rights in court. This is partly the consequence of lack of trust in legal institutions on the part of religious believers. As a result, there is no proper system for the legal appraisal of dubious actions by the state administration or for the solving of disputes in the religious sphere. There are nevertheless examples of some religious groups, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, successfully defending their rights in court.

Another problem affecting religious freedom arises out of the fact, already noted, that despite the theoretical equality of all believers and religious associations in Kazakhstan the two main religions, Orthodoxy and Islam, enjoy greater respect and attention on the part of the state. They jointly try to prevent the activity of many other religious associations and draw the attention of the state to the need to struggle against them. Thus, for example, they oppose the foundation and registration of

religious formations which do not recognise their jurisdiction, and suggest that the authorities should coordinate the registration of any religious associations with the Orthodox and Muslim authorities. Religious associations usually do not own private property and have to rent premises from the state and from non-state organisations for religious gatherings and events. In the case of 'nontraditional' associations, the local authorities routinely reject such applications, either of their own accord or in line with instructions from state bodies. It is normal for representatives of state bodies to attend events arranged by Islamic or Orthodox organisations, but their presence at similar events arranged by other religious associations is not encouraged.<sup>14</sup> Religious associations do not as a rule have mass media at their disposal. The allocation of broadcasting time or printing facilities is not usually in favour of the majority of religious associations. At the same time the media regularly disseminate material warning of the danger presented by 'nontraditional' religious associations.

Another problematic area for religious freedom is that of conflict between citizens' religious beliefs and the duties expected of them by the state. One example is military service. This is obligatory in Kazakhstan, but despite the fact that legislation stipulates the possibility of alternative service the mechanism of such a substitution has not yet been worked out. Meanwhile members of certain religious associations have been put on trial for refusing to bear arms for religious reasons.<sup>15</sup> This example is a vivid illustration of the fact that securing coordination between state and private interests for mutually beneficial purposes is not a priority of the state of Kazakhstan and its legislation.

A permanent fixture of the religious scene in Kazakhstan is the threat of the spread of Islamic fundamentalism. This threat sharpens religious tensions and serves as an additional reason for the limitation of citizens' religious freedoms. A large number of Muslim organisations are being set up in Kazakhstan with assistance from abroad and independent of the Muslim Spiritual Directorate. They propagate radical Islam and their final goal is the creation of a new political and social regime. The state does not possess methods for prohibiting the activity of such organisations when they do not violate the law. For example, the state cannot formally prevent Kazakh citizens from going overseas to receive education in Islamic centres. The state must choose between observing human rights and bringing extra-legal administrative pressure to bear on radical organisations. In practice, the state chooses the second alternative, which has the tacit approval of the majority of the population. It is quite obvious, however, that the problem of the spread of Islamic radicalism cannot be solved by administrative methods only, caused as it is by significant factors such as the weakness of state bodies and of traditional Islam, geopolitical considerations and the economic situation in the country.

### **Prospects for Religious Freedom**

Despite tremendous positive changes that have taken place in the religious sphere since the end of communism, the future for religious freedom in Kazakhstan does not seem bright. The years since independence have not seen the establishment in Kazakhstan of a political and legal regime within the bounds of which citizens' rights would be secured and respected, and state and citizens would have mutual rights and duties. The reasons for this are clear: the absence of developed institutions of democracy and civil society, and the reluctance on the part of the authorities to develop such institutions; the low level of legal culture among state officials; the low level of citizens' social activity; the predominance of the state in various spheres



of life; a complex geopolitical situation; and the necessity for rapid solutions to complicated economic problems, which require state intervention.

Meanwhile the state does not as yet recognise religious organisations as important social institutions. It does not trust them to perform social functions and does not cooperate seriously with believers and their associations in solving social problems. Thus the state finds itself in a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, it cannot deny the rights and freedoms of citizens: to do so would be to revert to Soviet-style practices. On the other hand, it is not interested in the development of religious institutions. The state would rather prefer these to be weak, particularly in view of the unpredictable consequences for the existence of the state itself which will be the result of the strengthening of Muslim sentiment and the development of Islam. Meanwhile Protestant organisations are perceived to be undertaking a reappraisal of values of no interest to the political elite. It is a fact that religious organisations exist, but the state would rather deal with familiar and unproblematic religions, traditionally occupying passive positions, rather than with the new and sometimes aggressive ones that do not meet standard requirements.

The experience of recent years in Kazakhstan shows, however, that problems posed by the existence of religious organisations cannot be solved by administrative measures alone. Efforts, for example, to distinguish between 'traditional' and 'non-traditional', 'good' and 'bad' religions can have harmful consequences beyond the area of religious freedom. The state may be inclined to go on to distinguish between 'good' and 'bad' mass media, political parties and nongovernmental associations, and this will lead to severe restrictions on citizens' rights and to the dying out of many democratic institutions established after long years of 'nonfreedom'. At first glance it might seem much easier to put administrative barriers in place than to work with the help of law-abiding believers and religious associations against extremist organisations and to remove the reasons for the appearance of the latter. The situation in the sphere of religious freedom cannot be examined in isolation from other processes at work in society, however. In order to preserve social stability, it would be more advantageous if the state were to create a regime of tolerance and conditions under which every citizen was able to confess any religion, while of course at the same time remaining liable, like any other citizen, for punishment for specific offences. The state should make law-abiding believers its allies, respecting their convictions, rather than maintaining an endless fight against often-imaginary enemies in the religious field.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> By 1917 Russians were around 18.91 per cent of the population of Kazakhstan and Ukrainians 10.37 per cent. See Bekmakhanova, 1986, pp. 171, 174.
- <sup>2</sup> In 1986 Russians were 40.7 per cent of the population of Kazakhstan, Kazakhs were 38.4 per cent, Ukrainians 6.1 per cent and Germans 6.0 per cent. At that time a total of 120 different nationalities lived in Kazakhstan. See *Kazakhskaya*, 1988, vol. 2, p. 21.
- <sup>3</sup> Sociological research in Kazakhstan shows that while nearly 50 per cent of the population who belong to Asian nationalities take part in religious ceremonies, only 15–20 per cent of them can be considered to be orthodox. See *Religioznaya*, 1997.
- <sup>4</sup> In 1989 there were 671 religious associations in Kazakhstan, of which 168 were Evangelical Christian-Baptist, 171 Lutheran, 62 Russian Orthodox and only 46 Islamic. See Ivanov and Trofimov, 1999, p. 4. Most of the Protestants in Kazakhstan during the Soviet period were Germans and Ukrainians. More than 70 per cent of the religious associations active in Kazakhstan in 1990 had total or partial German membership. See Artem'yev,

1990, p. 50.

- <sup>5</sup> According to the latest data, 80 per cent of the ethnic Germans in Kazakhstan have emigrated to Germany. During the last ten years some 3,000,000 people, including 1,500,000 Russians and 593,000 Germans, have left Kazakhstan. Members of all ethnic groups deported to Kazakhstan in the 1930s, except for the Meskhetian Turks, are also leaving. See Panorama, 2000; Kazakhstanskaya, 2000b.
- <sup>6</sup> According to data from 2002 the 2980 registered religious associations in the country included 1633 Islamic, 214 Russian Orthodox and 68 Roman Catholic. Protestant organisations of various denominations (Baptist, Seventh-Day Adventist, Lutheran and others) are when added together the most numerous after the Muslim and Orthodox organisations. Kazakhstanskaya, 2002a.
- <sup>7</sup> In the mid 1990s, 35–40 per cent of the population of Kazakhstan considered themselves to be believers but only some 15–20 per cent of the population were more than passive. See Uroven', 1996, p. 7. In 2002 sociological research in Kazakhstan revealed that while nearly 50 per cent of the interviewees considered themselves to be believers only 7.6 per cent of them observed religious rites and 42.8 per cent did not take part in religious ceremonies. See Kazakhstanskaya, 2002b.
- <sup>8</sup> 'Polozheniye o religioznykh ob'yedineniyakh v Kazakhskoi SSR', adopted by a decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR on 23 June 1976, was the basic normative act regulating the activity of religious associations. See Vedomosti, 1976.
- <sup>9</sup> The closeness of state institutions and the Russian Orthodox Church in particular is evident for example in the fact that during the process of relocation of the capital of Kazakhstan from Almaty to Astana in 1998–2000 the administrative centre of the main diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church was also relocated from Almaty to Astana.
- <sup>10</sup> Under Article 110 of the Civil Code (1994) 'The appointment by foreign religious centres of leaders of religious associations operating on the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan takes place with the agreement of the appropriate authorities in the Republic of Kazakhstan', and 'The founding of spiritual, educational and religious associations and institutions and missionary activity by foreign citizens and persons without citizenship shall be allowed only after their accreditation by the local authorities and under the condition that they correspond to the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan.' (This provision was abolished in 1998.) Under Article 5 of the Constitution (1995) 'The activities of foreign religious associations on the territory of the Republic as well as the appointment of heads of religious associations in the Republic by foreign religious centres shall be carried out in coordination with the appropriate state institutions of the Republic'. It is ironic that while struggling against foreign missionaries the Russian Orthodox Church in Kazakhstan apparently does not take account of the fact that it is itself the representative of a foreign organisation in the country, as it is under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate.
- <sup>11</sup> During one of the sessions of the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan (Assambleya narodov Kazakhstana) in 1999 the leading mufti suggested creating a council of the religious leaders of the country, with the president of the country at its head, which would control religious activity. It was suggested that representatives of Islam, Russian Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Buddhism and Judaism should be included as the 'traditional' religions of the country. There are only a few Buddhist and Jewish communities in Kazakhstan; there are hundreds of Protestant ones, but the latter were not to participate in the work of the council. (A council of this type has not yet in fact been set up.)
- <sup>12</sup> See note 10.
- <sup>13</sup> In Kazakhstan there have been occasions when religious organisations inviting foreign clergy have been illegally required to obtain licenses similar to those required of commercial organisations that wish to import workers from overseas.
- <sup>14</sup> One local state official was severely criticised by the Ministry of Internal Affairs for being present at a congress of Jehovah's Witnesses. See Kazakhstanskaya, 2000a.
- <sup>15</sup> During the period 1999–2002 no information was available about convictions of believers because of their refusal to serve in the army.

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