

Kazakhstan Violates Christians' Religious Freedom

Kazakhstan's infringements of religious freedom are due in part to the country's newly adopted Religion Law. The law went into effect last year and has many calling for the U.S. Department of State and Hillary Clinton to send a special envoy to investigate violations of **religious freedom**. The new law requires all religious communities to register or re-register their organizations and churches with the government.

On Oct. 25, the new "re-registration" deadline was enforced for all **religious communities**. All churches were required to turn in paperwork that included the signatures of at least 50 church members. If a church did not have 50 members, it was not eligible for registration and was scheduled for liquidation.

The government of Kazakhstan has been forceful and aggressive, and boasts of successfully stripping 579 religious communities of their registration rights. They have also reduced the number of officially recognized faiths from 46 to merely 17. Included in the reduction are faith-based civic organizations, which fell to 3,088 from the previous total of 4,551. If any of these groups continue meeting to practice their faith, which is no longer officially sanctioned by the government, they could face criminal charges.

All faiths and many denominations have been a target of the government, including Scientologists, Jehovah's Witnesses, sects of Islam, Presbyterians, evangelicals, Seventh-day Adventists, Methodists and Baptists.

Kazakhstan's new Religion Laws infringe on the religious freedom of its people and deserves immediate attention from the U.S. Department of State. Without involvement from the

international community, life for religious minorities in Kazakhstan is certain to continue on this downhill trajectory.

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