

Kazakhstan



Online Engagement with Religious Materials

Sunni Muslims who do not subscribe to the state-sanctioned form of Islam are often targeted for their peaceful, online religious activities. Unduly restrictive and arbitrarily enforced legislation cracking down on so-called “public calls for terrorism” and “incitement of religious discord” have resulted in fines and prison sentences for expressing religious views and posting about Islam, religious texts, and sermons.



Galymzhan Abilkairov

RELIGION OR BELIEF: Sunni Muslim
 ARRESTED: April 23, 2018
 SENTENCE: 7 Years, 7 Months’ Imprisonment
 REASON FOR PERSECUTION: Posting sermons about Islam online



Abdukhalil Abduzhabbarov

RELIGION OR BELIEF: Sunni Muslim
 ARRESTED: February 18, 2017
 SENTENCE: 8 Years’ Imprisonment
 REASON FOR PERSECUTION: Giving sermons and religious talks



Anatoli Zernichenko

RELIGION OR BELIEF: Sunni Muslim
 ARRESTED: October 15, 2021
 SENTENCE: 7 Years’ Imprisonment
 REASON FOR PERSECUTION: Posting religious texts online



Dilmurat Makhamatov

RELIGION OR BELIEF: Sunni Muslim
 ARRESTED: December 19, 2018
 SENTENCE: 8 Years’ Imprisonment
 REASON FOR PERSECUTION: Making comments about Islam that were later posted online by another individual



Dadash Mazhenov

RELIGION OR BELIEF: Sunni Muslim
 ARRESTED: April 23, 2018
 SENTENCE: 7 Years, 8 Months’ Imprisonment
 REPORTS OF TORTURE: Yes
 REASON FOR PERSECUTION: Posting religious content online



Beket Mynbasov

RELIGION OR BELIEF: Sunni Muslim
 ARRESTED: October 27, 2018
 SENTENCE: 7 Years, 6 Months’ Imprisonment



Ernar Samatov

RELIGION OR BELIEF: Sunni Muslim
 ARRESTED: October 27, 2018
 SENTENCE: 7 Years, 6 Months’ Imprisonment

WhatsApp Group Discussion on Islam

In 2018, authorities arrested nine individuals on bogus charges of inciting religious discord and promoting terrorism for their participation in a peaceful, online WhatsApp discussion on Islam. Despite a 2021 UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention decision calling for their release, three individuals remain in prison.

FoRB Victims List Stats 16 out of 2,282

Religion or Belief	# of Victims
Sunni	15
Jehovah’s Witness	1
Total	16

Type of Abuse	# of Victims
Imprisoned	16
Total	16

Average Prison Sentence 6 Years, 8 Months

Reports of	# of Victims
Torture	2
Medical Neglect	0
Total	2

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Frank R. Wolf FoRB Victims List Background

The International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRFA), as amended by the Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act of 2016, requires USCIRF to:

make publicly available, to the extent practicable...lists of persons it determines are imprisoned or detained, have disappeared, been placed under house arrest, been tortured, or subjected to forced renunciation of faith for their religious activity or religious freedom advocacy by the government of a foreign country that the Commission recommends for designation as a country of particular concern [CPC]...or by a nonstate actor that the Commission recommends for designation as an entity of particular concern [EPC].

USCIRF developed the Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) Victims List—an online public database—to implement this provision for countries USCIRF recommends for Country of Particular Concern (CPC) or Special Watch List (SWL) status. The list also includes such victims located in the de facto territories of nonstate actors that USCIRF recommends for Entity of Particular Concern (EPC) status, according to the same criteria.

Due to limited resources, USCIRF is unable to identify and document all victims that meet the statutory requirement to be included on the FoRB Victims List and generally relies on receiving submissions from outside individuals and organizations. As such, the information contained in the database does not reflect country, regional, or global trends. Furthermore, percentages highlighted in this section should not be used for extrapolation purposes nor interpreted as a particular group experiencing greater violations than another or a particular country committing violations at a greater rate than others. To support this project, USCIRF invites those with credible information on victims to submit information using the Victims List Intake Form at www.uscirtf.gov/form/uscirtf-victims-list-intake-form.

FoRB Victims List Stats Overall

Perpetrator	Victims Documented
Algeria	5
Azerbaijan	11
Burma	5
China	798
Cuba	11
Egypt	18
Eritrea	61
Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)	2
Houthis	3
India	55
Indonesia	9
Iran	351
Iraq	2
Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP)	1
Kazakhstan	16
Malaysia	4
Nicaragua	68
Nigeria	9
North Korea	11
Pakistan	87
Russia	488
Saudi Arabia	50
Sri Lanka	1
Tajikistan	16
Turkmenistan	31
Uzbekistan	88
Vietnam	81
Total	2,282

Religion or Belief	Victims Documented
Adivasi	1
Ahmadi Religion of Peace and Light	3
Baha'i	169
Bon	1
Buddhist – Hoa Hao	6
Buddhist – Theravada	3
Buddhist – Tibetan	93
Buddhist – Unspecified/Other	32
Christian – Catholic	79
Christian – Church of Almighty God	240
Christian – Jehovah's Witness	283
Christian – Orthodox	21
Christian – Protestant	150
Christian – Unspecified/Other	65
Duong Van Minh	4
ECKist (Eckankar)	1
Erfan-e Halgheh Practitioner	3
Falun Gong	217
Hindu	10
Humanist	1
Jewish	1
Muslim – Ahmadiyya	20
Muslim – Qur'anist	1
Muslim – Shi'a	40
Muslim – Sufi	64
Muslim – Sunni	412
Muslim – Unspecified/Other	233
Santeria	5
Scientologist	1
Shaman	1
Sikh	1
Yarsani	38
Unknown/Unspecified	83
Total	2,282

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Not Released

Anatoli Zernichenko
Dadash Mazhenov
Abdukhaliil Abduzhabbarov
Galymzhan Abilkairov
Dilmurat Makhamatov
Beket Mynbasov
Ernar Samatov

Released

Daniil Smal
Nariman Seytzhanov
Zhuldyzbek Taurbekov
Azamat Umbetaliyev
Esim Suleimenov
Zhasulan Iskakov
Samat Adilov
Nazim Abdrakhmanov
Bolatbek Nurgaliyev