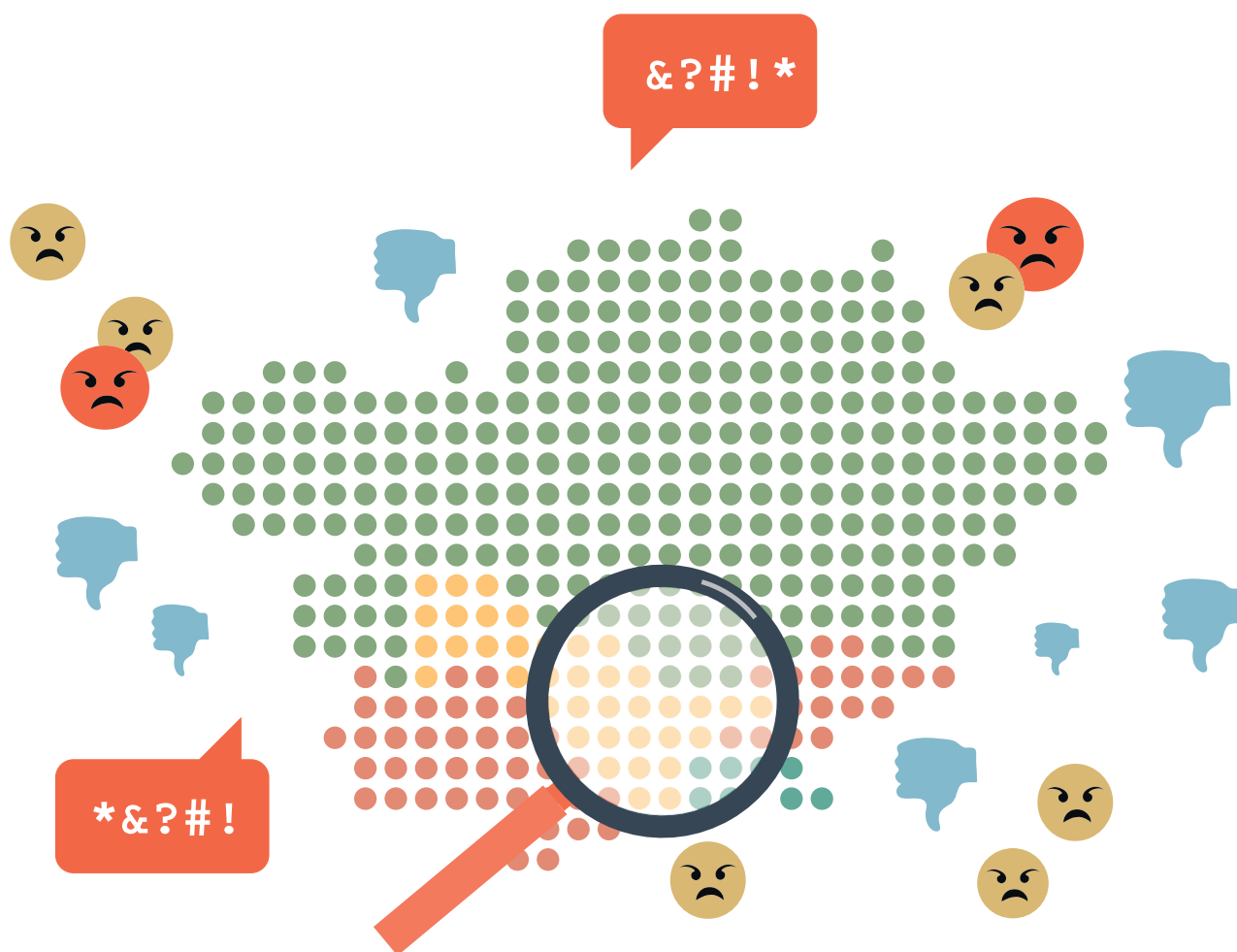


# 2022 Report on Monitoring Hate Speech and Disinformation in Central Asia



This project is funded  
by the European Union





---

## Authors of the report:

### **Media Monitors:**

Daria Osmanova, Lola Islamova, Modern Journalism Development Centre (Uzbekistan)  
Shirin Amanbekova, Kanykei Kenensarieva, Media Support Center Foundation (Kyrgyzstan)  
Farzona Sharifzoda, Jamshed Ma'ruf, Public Organization "Gurdofarid" (Tajikistan)  
Zjanserik Tileukhan, Snezhana Tsoy, MediaNet International Centre for Journalism (Kazakhstan)

### **Media Monitor Coordinator:**

Duman Smakov, MediaNet International Centre for Journalism (Kazakhstan)

### **Program Coordinators:**

Maira Zeinilova, ERIM, Equal Rights & Independent Media (France)  
Flora Graioni, ERIM, Equal Rights & Independent Media (France)

# Table of Contents

<b>3</b>	<b>Introduction</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Methodology</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Hate speech in Central Asia</b>
8	Kyrgyzstan
13	Uzbekistan
17	Kazakhstan
19	Tajikistan
<b>23</b>	<b>Disinformation in Central Asia</b>
23	Kyrgyzstan
27	Uzbekistan
28	Kazakhstan
31	Tajikistan
<b>33</b>	<b>Conclusions</b>
<b>34</b>	<b>List of selected and monitored online sources</b>
34	Kazakhstan
35	Kyrgyzstan
36	Uzbekistan
37	Tajikistan

# Introduction

The main challenges for Central Asia in 2022 were the war in Ukraine, border conflicts between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, immunisation of the population, new restrictions related to the coronavirus pandemic, the situation in Afghanistan and internal political circumstances: the bloody protests in Kazakhstan in January, the handover of the Kempir-Abad reservoir in Kyrgyzstan, the Karakalpak events in Uzbekistan and protests in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region in Tajikistan.

The frequent conflicts on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border continue to have tragic outcomes for both countries: in 2022 people have been killed and wounded on both sides, many border residents have been forced to leave their homes, and local infrastructure has been severely damaged. In addition, the conflict has caused a slowdown in the economic growth of the two countries and has had a generally negative impact on the political situation in Central Asia. Conflict resolution experts are relying on people-to-people diplomacy to reconcile the two countries. The rise to power of the Taliban in neighbouring Afghanistan - a regime which several countries refuse to recognise and have banned - has caused additional societal tensions and presented the governments of Central Asia with a difficult geopolitical dilemma.

In this report, we would like to present the results of media monitoring

conducted from January to December 2022 by a team of media monitors as part of the EU-funded BRYCA project<sup>1</sup>. This report is an overview of hate speech, disinformation and fake news trends monitored in 4 Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) in 2022. The aim is to objectively present the main trends of disinformation and hate speech in Central Asia for the year 2022 to the academic community, local authorities as well as the citizens of these countries. The information in this report can be used by academic researchers and fact-checking platforms and can also be presented to local authorities and citizens of these countries. The examples presented in this document are for informational purposes and are in no way aimed at spreading hate speech.

---

<sup>1</sup> BRYCA (Building Resistance in Youth in Central Asia to the influence of illegal hate speech and misinformation online and on social media) is a project funded by the European Union and implemented by ERIM (IREX Europe doing business as ERIM), Media Support Center Foundation (Kyrgyzstan), MediaNet International Centre for Journalism (Kazakhstan), Modern Journalism Development Center (Uzbekistan), and Public Organization "Gurdofarid" (Tajikistan). The project promotes critical thinking and aims to strengthen the resilience of youth to misinformation and hate speech online in Central Asia as part of the global objective to promote support to civil society in the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms worldwide.

## Methodology

Our monitoring techniques involve using the methodology of the informational-analytical center “SOVA”<sup>2</sup>, which has been specialising in the monitoring and analysis of nationalism, racism, hate crimes, hate speech, and relations between religious organisations for more than 20 years and conducts regular research studies to identify hate speech in the media and online.

### Qualitative component

A manual screening method was used both to collect and document information. All messages containing hate speech, fake information and disinformation were monitored and manually sorted by a team of media monitors from the four countries targeted by the BRYCA project. Keyword searches were also applied to search the material more comprehensively. The project chose manual screening over machine monitoring as the latter does not always seize the context and is therefore not very effective in identifying hate speech messages in all their subtleties.

At the beginning of the project, the team of media monitors identified a list of keywords, which currently comprises 707 words, in Russian, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek and Tajik. They also targeted 96 websites, 88 groups

and pages on social media platforms and 93 opinion leaders.

When selecting media sources, the following factors were taken into account: the intensity of traffic, the toxicity of comments, the number of articles and posts in online publications and social media, and the genre of the material: posts, news, analytics, multimedia (text, photo, video or audio), photo report, interview, survey, comment/opinion (editorial or author), the topic of the article/reportage, frequency of publications, coverage or publication of material with elements of hate speech. This selection procedure was also applied to the public social network pages.

When it came to selecting opinion leaders, parameters such as the number of reposts of their messages, the number of comments under their posts, and the number of subscribers/friends were considered. As opinion leaders have been publishing messages that meet our criteria less and less frequently, it was decided to include their publications in only two scenarios:

- if the media monitor/s found a link redirecting to the opinion leader in the media analysed
- if there were bombastic statements from the opinion leader relating to a current issue.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.sova-center.ru/>

The qualitative component of the monitoring process also includes the analysis of messages to determine the severity of the sentiment (mild, moderate, harsh). In order to classify the sentiment of hate speech, the media monitors used the criteria outlined by Aleksandr Verkhovsky.<sup>[1]</sup>



### **“Harsh” Hate speech**

1. Direct and immediate calls for violence.
2. Calls for violence using general slogans.
3. Direct and immediate calls for discrimination.
4. Calls for discrimination in the form of general slogans.
5. Veiled calls for violence and discrimination (for example, promotion of positive contemporary or historical experiences of violence or discrimination).



### **“Moderate” Hate speech**

1. Justification of historical cases of discrimination and violence.
2. Publications and statements that question the generally acknowledged historical facts of violence and discrimination.
3. Allegations of historical crimes by one or another ethnic (or other) group.
4. Pointing to the links of any social group with local and/or foreign political and state structures to discredit it.

5. Allegations of the criminality of one or another ethnic group.
6. Speculations about the disproportionate superiority of any ethnic group in material wealth, representation in structures of power, etc.
7. The accusation of the negative influence of any social group on society, the state.
8. Appeals to prevent the consolidation of certain social groups in the region (district, city, etc.).



### **“Mild” Hate speech**

1. Creation of a negative image of an ethnic group.
2. Mentioning the names of an ethnic group in a derogatory context.
3. Allegations of the inferiority of an ethnic group.
4. Allegations of the moral infirmities of an ethnic group.
5. Mentioning a social group or its representatives as such in a humiliating or offensive context (for example, in a crime chronicle).
6. Quoting xenophobic statements or publishing such texts without corresponding disclaimers that makes clear the opinion of the interviewee and the position of the author of the text (journalist); providing space in a newspaper for apparent nationalist propaganda without an editorial comment or other debate.

## **The quantitative component**

The quantitative component makes it possible to identify trends, generalise the findings and draw valid conclusions. Media monitors recorded the number of publications viewed (including the respective comments), as well as the number of publications relating to the following categories: nationalism, ethnicity, tribalism, sexism, ageism, religion, language, pol-

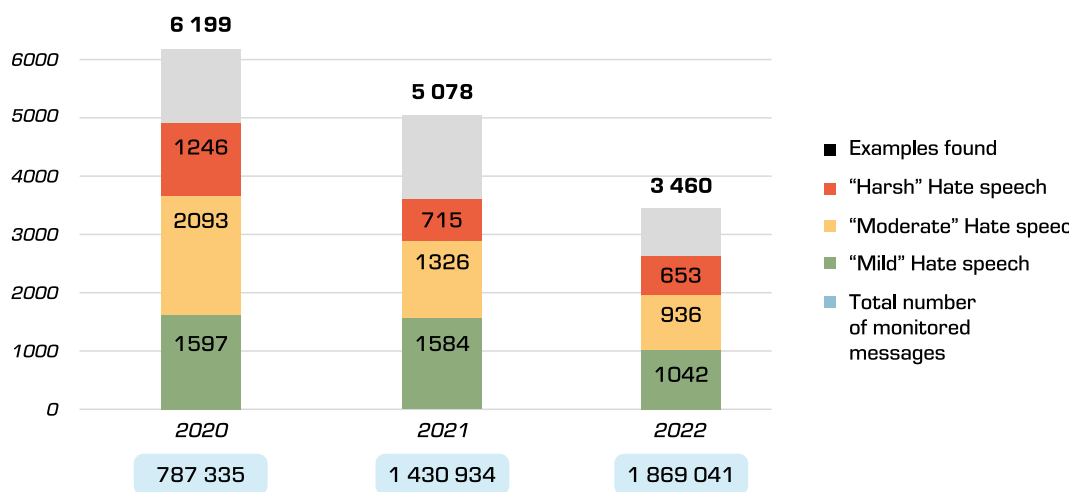
itics/geopolitics, state propaganda, racism, disinformation, coronavirus, cybersecurity, LGBT, cyberbullying, violence, interesting fake news stories and other categories that appeared relevant to the study. The findings were documented in tables containing the category, date of publication, body of the message, toxic comments, a screenshot, and link to the material analysed.



# Hate speech in Central Asia

In 2022, the media monitoring team reviewed 1,869,041 media messages, collecting data on a daily basis, and

processed them according to the project's pre-defined methodology.



Over a year of monitoring, 2,631 hate speech messages were detected.

Of the hate speech messages detected, 653 were classified as "harsh hate speech". These messages mainly called for the expulsion of certain social groups from the region or the country and also expressed a desire to kill them or cause them physical harm.

Milder forms of hate speech, such as "moderate" (936 messages) and "mild" hate speech (1,042), were also found during the monitoring process. We also noticed that "harsh" hate

speech has become less prevalent in these regions and has essentially transformed into "moderate" or, in some cases, "mild" forms. This tendency might be explained by numerous contributing factors. Many CA (Law on protection against inaccurate (false) information - Kyrgyzstan<sup>3</sup>, Article 274, Criminal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan Dissemination of deliberately false information<sup>4</sup>, tougher penalties for spreading false

<sup>3</sup> <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/112282?cl=ru-ru>

<sup>4</sup> [https://kodeksy-kz.com/ka/ugolovnyj\\_kodeks/274.htm](https://kodeksy-kz.com/ka/ugolovnyj_kodeks/274.htm)

information and propaganda in Uzbekistan<sup>5</sup>, situation with similar laws in Tajikistan<sup>6</sup>) countries have enacted laws that criminalise hate speech and the dissemination of fake news online, making it easier to prosecute individuals who engage in such behaviour. Additionally, online platforms have increased their moderation efforts, with many social media sites implementing policies to remove hate speech and ban users who engage in such behaviour. In addition, increased awareness of the dangers of hate speech and educational measures have led to a cultural shift in attitudes towards discriminatory behaviour. We wrote in detail about the regulations and penalties in our 2020 [report](#). Also, the fight against coronavirus may have accelerated the implementation of new legislation regarding fake news and hate speech.

This report aims to interpret the results of our monitoring efforts in each country individually and analyse a wide range of cases of hate speech in each of them. **The specific examples and analysis described below were provided by the team of media monitors that working in that particular country.**



## Kyrgyzstan

In 2022, hate speech messages and disinformation were linked to political and geopolitical topics such as the January events in Kazakhstan, the

<sup>5</sup> <https://uznews.uz/posts/7685>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.article19.org/ru/resources/%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%B4%D0%B6%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%BD-%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B6%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%8F-%D0%B8%D0%BD%D1%84%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%BC%D0%B0%D1%86%D0%B8%D1%8F-%D0%B2-%D1%80%D0%B0/>

war in Ukraine, the invasion of Kyrgyz territory by Tajik military forces, of the President of Azerbaijan visiting Kyrgyzstan, the handover of the Kempir-Abad reservoir to Uzbekistan. Another topic on the agenda was freedom of speech: the temporary blocking of online media, rallies, etc...

## Protests in Kazakhstan

When the January events began in Kazakhstan, the media was filled with all kinds of news related to this crisis. Many Kyrgyz helped by collecting and sending clothes and food to Kazakhstan. Moreover, Kyrgyzstan cancelled the obligatory PCR test for Kazakhstani citizens, so people were able to travel across the border safely. However, there was also negative reactions to the crisis, such as the rallies in Bishkek with people protesting against Kyrgyz troops being sent to Kazakhstan<sup>7</sup>. After analysing public comments, the media monitors reported a general reluctance to interfere with the politics of another country.

The news story reporting that Kyrgyz musician Vikram Ruzakhunov was detained in Kazakhstan for allegedly participating in a rally, tortured in prison, and then returned to Kyrgyzstan for a surgical operation resulted in a lot of negative comments from the Kazakhs<sup>8</sup>. Subscribers to the web pages expressed the view that “the Kyrgyzs call the Kazakhs brothers, but this is how they behave in return”.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/p/CYYb6K-7sn9F/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/p/CZGX9LSqeb6/>



**aman.ibraevv:** “You say the Kazakhs are our relatives, but this is how they behave. We need to tell you the truth: the Kazakhs are not human”.

**manas\_media\_group:** “To be honest, the Kazakhs do not support the Kyrgyzs. We are the only ones running to help them, they don’t have the same attitude.”

**samat19881020:** “Арам гана манка Казактар ,ошолор адам деле эмес.”

---

## The Russian Invasion of Ukraine

In early February 2022, information about a possible Russian attack on Ukraine began to spread in the Kyrgyz media, but it was met with scepticism. U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan warned that Russia could attack Ukraine within weeks, to which Moscow replied that it had no such plan<sup>9</sup>.

Warnings of an impending invasion began to be published in the media from October 2021 onwards. However, on 21 February 2022, Russia recognised the independence of the Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR) and the Luhansk People’s Republic (LPR) and, on 24 February invaded Ukraine, calling it a “special military operation”. The war continues to this day; houses and buildings are still being reduced to rubble, the death toll continues to rise and some 6.8 mil-

---

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.azattyk.org/a/harkov-do-orusiyaga-karshy-jurush-ottu-/31689925.html?fbclid=IwAR0a68yCFvbRc3ffPaQG-mrjy-PNXlBXA6t3Zl83B3e0MPHz7tN17Hqf-2BnQ>

lion refugees have already fled the country. Several Kyrgyz media users initially supported President Putin’s policy, arguing that it was the right decision to protect Russia from NATO.



**Gulum Tolubaevna:** “How is it possible to have presidents in Ukraine who trust the USA and not Russia, our next-door neighbour. Any fool can see who is closer to the USA and who will help in a difficult time... They are stupid or something”.

**Baktygul Asanaliyeva:** “You should have been friends with Russia from the beginning, first of all, we are brothers, secondly, Russia has tolerated your whims for a long time. Everything has its limits”.

---

The audience of the Kyrgyz-language media blamed the president of Ukraine for what happened. Common statements among the comments described him as “an actor without the professional experience needed to be a president”, “a clown”, and that he “plays a two-faced game”.



**Rakhat Rustamova:** “The clown destroyed his country in an attempt to save his throne, and now, for this, he wants another world war”

**satarova.chynara:** “This is impossible. If Putin wanted to occupy the country, he would have done it. Enough drama”

**Joomart Darmanov:** ““Since the artist is throwing a tantrum, America

*and Europe stand behind him. If Russia wanted to, it could destroy him in a day”.*

---

Commentators also blame the USA for what happened, believing it is their fault the Ukraine has ended up in this situation.



**Akai Begaliev:** *“Biden is a son of a bitch. He pretends to know nothing, though he’s the one who started it all. Putin is aware that he wants to destroy him like Kaddafi. Nothing of the sort will happen”.*

**kasymbekov76:** *“Nothing will come of Zelya’s junkies. Why does he need a war? America will wipe it off the face of the earth, and then blame the Russians. He is following American orders that will lead to another world war.”*

---

It is clear from the comments that many users support Russia. Some consider Russia their main ally, some write that Ukraine deserved to be attacked because of its actions, etc.

### **Fighting on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border**

The Kyrgyz Border Guard Service reported that firing started again at the Kyrgyz-Tajik border around 6 a.m. on 16 September 2022. According to their reports, the Tajik side fired at the areas of Eki-Tash, Chyr-Dobo,

Kum-Bazar and Orto-Boz in Batken<sup>10</sup>. As a result of this armed attack, people were killed and houses, shops and buildings were burned down. Both sides blamed each other for the assault. In Kyrgyzstan, non-governmental organisations, civic activists, bloggers and influencers worked together to collect humanitarian aid and send it to Batken. They focused not only on humanitarian aid but also on providing accurate information. On 20 September a protocol was signed in order to resolve the armed conflict at the Kyrgyz-Tajik border which ordered the withdrawal of troops and military equipment. The audience of the Kyrgyz-language media reacted extremely negatively to these events. Aggressive language was used not only against the president of Tajikistan, but hate speech was also directed at Tajik citizens.



**nizamova\_baktygul:** *“We need to tear out the tongue of the Tajiks, break their hands and scatter their ashes in the wind”*

**bakyt\_art:** *“Ramonster is an idiot, an old senile man. Those who support him and carry out his orders are jackals and cattle. No protocol will help these Nashakurs (drug addicts).”*

**Makuin Shtorm:** *“May God punish the Tajiks”*

**Rakhat Atakanova:** *“Break the hands of these Tajik dogs!”*

---

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.azattyk.org/a/32036183.html?fbclid=IwAR3pkYzfp\\_XaOyOd-O46pI-Tadg4Ch\\_IIm20zEIFwMNgC2HAke7s3mG-mpEE](https://www.azattyk.org/a/32036183.html?fbclid=IwAR3pkYzfp_XaOyOd-O46pI-Tadg4Ch_IIm20zEIFwMNgC2HAke7s3mG-mpEE)

## Victim blaming, sexism and “it’s her own fault!” narratives

The subject of violence and discrimination against women is one of the most widespread and hottest topics in Kyrgyz media, so any news relating to this topic always results in numerous comments and results in a public outcry.

In July, a local imam blamed women for the sharp increase in the price of food and meat in particular.

*“Do you know why meat prices have gone up in your town? They increase when women’s flesh cheapens. A woman’s meat becomes cheap when she bares her skin, and exposes her thighs as if they were thumbs. Because they aren’t being told: “You should be ashamed! How shameless you are, cover yourself! Whose daughter are you? Women’s meat has become cheaper. And now that women’s meat has become cheaper, the price of mutton in the bazaar has risen”, wrote Imam Sadybakas Doolov in his post<sup>11</sup>.*

Showman Emil Toktoshev made a video in which he criticises women for wearing short skirts during Orozo, fasting in Islam. The video titled “Орозода авария кылбай тургулачы кыздар” (“Girls, don’t cause accidents during Orozo”) has had more than 240,000 views. In the video, a driver crashes into the showman’s car and responds by saying that the accident was caused by the girl he was staring at and that women should not dress like that during Orozo.

<sup>11</sup> <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/31942755.html>

*“How is it not your fault? I was looking at you and crashed into a car. Is that how you dress during Orozo?”<sup>12</sup>*

Singer Anjelika Kairatovna wrote on her Instagram page that women are to blame for violence towards them. *“When a man sees a naked woman, his thoughts don’t change for the better. Violence against women, regardless of their religion, is their own fault. Dress properly, speak your mind and know how to protect yourself,”* she wrote. Anjelika has over 3 million followers on Instagram and she also has several fan pages that echo her posts<sup>13</sup>. The post has caused anger among her followers. Many were outraged that the singer had spoken so harshly about women and pointed out that the singer herself had only recently started to cover herself up and wear less revealing garments<sup>14</sup>.



**anarbekova.bezhemei:** *“Why is she pretending to be a saint after dinner?”*

**adamabevagulnara:** *“She said so as if she had been covering up her whole life”*

**bekabeka607:** *“You yourself went half-naked. Did you forget that being half-naked allows you to attract deputies?”*

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.instagram.com/p/CcNk-JqZgp-O/?utm\\_source=ig\\_embed&ig\\_rid=4bd7be29-7a10-40db-a080-968e9677f5b0](https://www.instagram.com/p/CcNk-JqZgp-O/?utm_source=ig_embed&ig_rid=4bd7be29-7a10-40db-a080-968e9677f5b0)

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/p/CbcbxGvgmok/>

<sup>14</sup> Started to behave according to the rules of Islam and follow a more modest dress code.

**zhazgulpaiazova:** “Oh my God! Only a month has passed since she started covering herself up, and already she’s started to condemn women. She herself went around in a revealing dress, a short one too”.

---

Not only do bloggers and influencers express their opinions regarding women, members of parliament (MPs) also like to share their views. For example, Shayloobek Atazov proposed that “underage girls should not leave the country alone”. In his opinion, girls that go abroad are quick to become corrupt and end up dishonouring the nation. This provoked public outrage and a lot of resentment. The women of Kyrgyzstan already feel that their rights are being violated, and this has only added fuel to the fire.

“Miss Universe” contestant and model Begimai Karybekova wrote a critical post on Instagram<sup>15</sup>. The well-known journalist and blogger, Nazira Aitbekova, also spoke out in defence of women<sup>16</sup>. Not everyone was critical of the MP: some people supported his proposal, especially Kyrgyz-speaking commentators. An online debate broke out between the supporters and opponents of the MP’s opinion. The comments of the MP’s supporters contained many sexist remarks.



**kyrgyz\_kaganaty:** “Atazov has the right initiative. The brainless will speak out. For the girls who are sent

---

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/p/Ce52rBxL-J8m/?hl=ru>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/p/Ce1F6x-BMlex/?hl=ru>

abroad for money, this initiative will be good for their future.”

**kerimaliev\_azamat:** “Atazov is handsome. Bitches will keep on whining.”

**kozukaka:** “Bitches like you destroy the dignity of the Kyrgyz. Atazov is doing the right thing. We support him.”

---

ΠThe head of the “Bishkek” Free Economic Zone<sup>17</sup> (FEZ), Kudret Taichabarov, decided to support Mr. Atazov and wrote on his Facebook page: “In fact, Turkish and Arab countries already know that Kyrgyz girls are easy to deceive. It has long been public knowledge that people go to Turkey to work in the sex industry. We all heard this recent news story: girls go to Dubai “on holiday” to earn between \$5,000 to \$25,000. That’s how young girls can afford to drive around in cars, have an iPhone 13 and eat out in restaurants all the time. We learned that many singers, actresses, bloggers and models work exactly like this. This is how the top Instagram influencers survive.”<sup>18</sup>

### NGOs and their representatives as hate speech targets

NGOs and their representatives are also targets for aggressive statements expressed by ordinary social media users, government officials and MPs. In February, Nadira Narmatova,

---

<sup>17</sup> <https://sez.kg/?lang=en>

<sup>18</sup> [https://kaktus.media/doc/461993\\_glava\\_sez\\_schitaet\\_cho\\_devyshki\\_iz\\_kyrgyzstana\\_za\\_granicey\\_rabotaut\\_v\\_sfere\\_seks\\_yslyg.html](https://kaktus.media/doc/461993_glava_sez_schitaet_cho_devyshki_iz_kyrgyzstana_za_granicey_rabotaut_v_sfere_seks_yslyg.html)



a member of the Kyrgyz Supreme Council Jogorku Kenesh<sup>19</sup>, asked that the draft law regarding non-profit organisations - which in her opinion should be given the status of foreign agents - be reconsidered. In her opinion, NGOs have a negative impact on the country's political and social issues.

*“Unfortunately, NGOs in the Kyrgyz Republic have recently been provoking conflicts in various sectors and not allowing the country a moment's rest.... If we don't label them as foreign agents, there will be no peace in the country. Several NGOs that are funded by foreign entities interfere with government structures and hinder the country's development,” said the MP<sup>20</sup>*

Although NGO workers do not have protected status as a group, these statements were regarded as hate speech because NGO workers are a vulnerable target and there is a lot of prejudice against them.



During the period from January-September 2022, political events within the country and on a global scale, had socio-economic consequences for the population of Uzbekistan and this determined the rhetoric and mood of the country's media output.

<sup>19</sup> It is Kyrgyzstan's Supreme Council, that is the unicameral Parliament of the Republic (source: <https://www.asianparliament.org/parliament/information/jogorku-kenesh--supreme-council--/40/21/view/>).

<sup>20</sup> [https://kaktus.media/doc/454315\\_depytat\\_hochet\\_vernyat\\_na\\_rassmotrenie\\_zakonoproekt\\_ob\\_inoagentah.html](https://kaktus.media/doc/454315_depytat_hochet_vernyat_na_rassmotrenie_zakonoproekt_ob_inoagentah.html), <https://www.instagram.com/p/CZOhZjDNnX5/>

## The Russian invasion of Ukraine

Social media users were deeply divided, forming two groups: they were either supporters or opponents of Russia's special military operation. Both sides expressed their stance actively using hate speech against each other. The fear of the Russian Federation seizing territories of Central Asian countries following their victory in Ukraine was actively spread among some users.

On 26 February 2022, the author of the telegram channel “*Ha Востокe не все как кажется*” (“*In the East not everything is as it seems*”) began to receive threats after he posted messages about the events in Ukraine adopting a pro-Russian stance and debunking fake news. He writes: “*Dear members of the group, good morning, here's the thing... I recently had texts on my channel about communications by Repost.uz and Kun.uz, reprinted from the Western press in a strongly anti-Russian tone. Maybe someone has read them. I have been receiving threats since I published these texts. Serious ones. The least harsh was the following: “Chernogayev, go to the Donetsk People's Republic.” At first, I didn't pay attention, but now I'm concerned. i.e.: If anything happens to me, I ask that you remember this message.*”

At the same time, the anti-Russian messages that emerged went beyond criticism of the Russian government and degenerated into anti-Russian rhetoric.

On 6 March 2022, Facebook user Nuryogdi Toshev sent an appeal to his page followers, rather than reinforcing

ing nationalism<sup>21</sup>, showed mercy to Russian refugees, and highlighted the generosity of the Uzbek people. Most commenters agreed, however, there were a few comments with nationalist views, calling for Russians to be treated badly, to put pressure on them, etc. Therefore, blatant hate speech appears in some of the comments.



**Examples:** *“The Russians should be fucked and tortured. They always insult us, calling them chumps and black-assed; Hey, they demand that Uzbeks in Russia speak Russian to each other. Migrants are tested in the Russian language and Russian history, Russian history!!! Churka is not perceived as a person, that’s where nationalism is at. Don’t let them come here, and if they do come, let them learn the state language; The Uzbek language is our state language, and all nations are obliged to respect it! So in all countries! Keep your opinion to yourself, okay?”*

On 15 March 2022, Facebook user Samar Sultangaleev answers an article by S. Bekjon Urdirganji in which he accuses Uzbekistan’s leadership of “Putinism”<sup>22</sup>. Safar Bekjon Urdirganji (the younger brother of Muhammad Salih, who served more than 20 years in prison in Uzbekistan) wrote an article entitled “Putinparast va Putinning malaylari” (“Putinist and

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100010641341668>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=112745378029553&set=gm.1129915244515907>

Putin servants”) in which he accused Uzbekistan’s political leadership of “Putinism” by calling them “Putinists” and “Putin servants”. User Samar Sultangaleev responded with a sarcastic post on his page, then shared it in the Facebook group “FUKAROLAR HUKUMAT HAKIDA” (“Citizens Talking about the Government”). The post is full of sentences that clearly fall into the category of moderate to harsh hate speech. Hate speech is also used in the post’s photo collage.

On 12 April 2022, on his personal Facebook page Dovud ŷgli Ota Fanisherbek criticizes the fact that Uzbekistan has not banned Russian TV channels, comparing their content to wastewater<sup>23</sup>. He also believes it is detrimental to the minds of young people. A violent debate erupted beneath the post, which was filled with many anti-Russian statements showing Russophobic sentiments. Some users remind people that Russia had already invaded Central Asia, claiming it is happening in a similar way to the Ukraine invasion. Some people believe that Russian channels are preparing the ground for a new imperial power that aims to control Uzbekistan and ensure its political subjugation.



**Examples:** *“As consumers of the garbage news channels, the way of thinking of the next generation will become distorted ; I believe that the national television channels of Uzbekistan should prepare programs that are useful for the improvement*

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=417847103437973&set=a.109854107570609>



*of human thinking; We are scattered, the Uzbek has become the enemy of the Uzbek; 100% true. As long as strong political and analytical programs are not being presented on our garbage TV channels, not even a dog would watch them; The picture turned out great. Toilet brains are primed for Kiselev's fairy tales; We've all suffered at the hands of these Russians. They're the ones who invaded our country and killed our ancestors, those Russians once occupied our country, as they occupy Ukraine today, they mistreated our ancestors as much as they now insult Ukrainians: Only ignorant idiots do not understand these things, but trolls like you don't recognize them... Homosexuality and submissiveness seem to run in your blood. You are all already incurable."*

---

On 13 April 2022, Facebook user Muazzam Ibrohimova<sup>24</sup> condemns the Russian special operation in a post and asks the public: "Can you guarantee that these zombies won't start saying "Tashkent is a Russian city" tomorrow"? Commentators actively supported the post and continued writing about these threats.

### **Events in Karakalpakstan**

The rhetoric and mood of social media users in July-August 2022 were determined by the events in Karakalpakstan, a sovereign republic in Uzbekistan. The triggering factor was the introduction of new draft amendments to the Uzbek Constitution, in which the word "sovereign" was removed from the description of the

---

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/muazzam.ibrohimova/posts/5180211572042274>

Republic of Karakalpakstan's status, and the reference to the right of the republic to secede from Uzbekistan was eliminated.

Peaceful protests began on 1 July 2022, though they quickly got out of control for the protestors in Nukus, the capital of the Republic of Karakalpakstan. They later spread to the cities of Chimbay and Muynak. The rhetoric became hysterical and reliant on nationalist arguments, mostly anti-Uzbek. At the same time, the most ardent supporters of Karakalpakstan's secession protested against the government, local and government officials and the authors of the "new changes" to the Constitution. Heated discussions were held between supporters of Karakalpakstan's secession from Uzbekistan and those who proposed depriving Karakalpakstan of the right to secede, citing the principle of inviolability of Uzbekistan's borders.

### **Russian army mobilisation and related migration flow**

An event that incited Uzbekistan media users to express their sentiments was the announcement of a partial army mobilisation in the Russian Federation and this resulted in an increase in the number of Russians arriving in Uzbekistan who were fleeing the mobilisation order. The mobilisation announcement on 21 September had an immediate impact on the region's logistics, as a significant number of Russian men sought to leave the country. Thousands arrived in neighbouring countries, which affected local public transportation, exacerbated rising living costs, and reducing housing affordability. Related economic pressure and social tensions may have led to in-

creased political tensions and a rise in local protests and social unrest.

In the social media we observed a clear division among two opposing groups of active users. In the Uzbek-speaking segment of the media, hate speech was oriented towards the relocated people based on historical facts relating to events that took place in the region in the 19th and 20th centuries. Their messages referred to a period that saw the Russian invasion of modern Central Asia, the Bolsheviks' rise to power, the repression that is associated with these events, manifestations of Russian chauvinism.

Some members of the audience of the Uzbek-speaking media compared relocated Russians with Uzbek labour migrants in Russia and commented on their living conditions and Russian attitudes towards them. The section of the country's population showing a positive attitude towards them were generally those who benefitted from the increase in housing rent and higher housing prices. However, the increased living costs were disadvantageous to poorer segments of the population, who were unable to afford the higher housing prices. This situation led to conflicting opinions in the media which was reflected in hate speech rhetoric. Primarily, the declaration of war against Ukraine forced the Uzbek- and Russian-speaking factions of Uzbekistan's media channels to broach the same topics and discourses, when previously the subject matter was very different. The media users were divided depending on their attitudes towards the events in Ukraine. Most Facebook users in the Uzbekistani media space showed

they were against the war and published many posts condemning it: this tendency was also detected for both the Uzbek- and Russian-speaking parties.

Facebook user Dovud Ygli Ota Fanisherbek published a post on his page on 26 September 2022 in which he asks President Mirziyoyev: *"Will you establish a patent for incoming Russians and make it harder for them to obtain citizenship?"*

In the comments under the post, some commentators suggest that relocated people should be chased away, calling them "churkas"<sup>25</sup>, while others called them pigs<sup>26</sup>.

### **September 2022: hate speech shifting from international and domestic politics to religious and gender issues**

Since mid-August, the intensity of these debates on international and domestic politics on the Internet has decreased and the Uzbek-language media channels have once again been flooded with posts on religious themes, spiritual and moral issues and examples of gender imbalance.

By the end of September, the discussion of all these issues including Karakalpakstan and the war in Ukraine had almost completely disappeared

<sup>25</sup> "churka" = literally 'block of wood', is an offensive term that can refer to a stupid, uneducated person (sources [https://www.lrb.co.uk/blog/2013/november/russia-for-russians#:~:text=\(Churka%2C%20literally%20'block%20of,the%20Caucasus%20or%20Central%20Asia;https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/%D1%87%D1%83%D1%80%D0%BA%D0%B0\)](https://www.lrb.co.uk/blog/2013/november/russia-for-russians#:~:text=(Churka%2C%20literally%20'block%20of,the%20Caucasus%20or%20Central%20Asia;https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/%D1%87%D1%83%D1%80%D0%BA%D0%B0)).

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100056380611241>

from the agenda of the Uzbek-language segment.

The Russian-language segment of the media continues to discuss the Russian Federation's special military operation, mobilisation and relocations, but without debates becoming too intense. It should be noted that the Russian-language segment has gone back to posting about individual rights and freedoms, while the Uzbek-language segment tends to focus on religious and sexist topics.

In the Uzbek media, hate speech is most commonly found in the comments that respond to social media posts and media publications. As a rule, single stereotypical opinions are broadcast, but there are also threads of dialogue that divide commentators into “us”, the good guys and “them”, the bad guys. Internet trolls also enter the fray, causing the level of aggression in the dialogue to intensify. It is not uncommon for such disputes to reach the level of open calls for violence, and it should be noted that in these discussions, commentators often stray far from the main topic of discussion, leading the conversation to be analysed on a “word-for-word” basis. Many publications rely on a moderator to avoid problems with aggressive commentators. This is why, for example, there are very few hate speech comments appearing under Gazeta.uz publications. Many sites do not even give people the opportunity to comment, such as Repost.uz and Anhor.uz. Quality publications try to protect their content from hate speech. When Uzbekistan's media channels were monitored in 2022, hate speech was most often found in the responses to content published on UPL.uz and Vesti.uz. These are unregistered media outlets, where comments tend

to escalate. The last internet publication is oriented towards propaganda, therefore the hate speech found in it is thematically homogeneous.



## Kazakhstan

The dominant hate speech narratives in 2022 were mostly related to the internal political situation in Kazakhstan, as well as the war in Ukraine. The most prominent topics causing a surge in hate speech were related to the status of the Kazakh and Russian languages, war propaganda, as well as Russian immigrants in Kazakhstan. Gender discrimination against women is the most persistent topic of hate speech in Kazakhstan and was recorded as one of the dominant ones throughout the entire monitoring period. Kazakhstani media channels have showed an overall increase in hate speech and propaganda.

Hate speech is most frequently detected in the comments responding to articles featuring topics that “trigger” the readers and it can be found in popular media outlets in Kazakh and Russian: nur.kz, tengrinews.kz, azattyq-ruhy.kz, zakon.kz, abai.kz, qamshy.kz, zhasalash.kz and alashainasy.kz.

### **Hate speech and wartime propaganda**

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, aggressive propaganda and justification of the war increased significantly in Kazakhstan. Provocative statements by Russian officials and public figures about the territorial integrity of Kazakhstan increased. These public declarations unsurprisingly provoked a surge of hate speech on the Internet.

One of the most high-profile cases is a post<sup>27</sup> on the VKontakte page of Dmitry Medvedev, Deputy Chairman of the Security Council of the Russian Federation. The publication described Kazakhstan as an “artificial state” and accused it of “Russian genocide”. It was deleted 10 minutes later but it quickly spread to other platforms<sup>28</sup>.

Medvedev’s statement provoked an extremely negative reaction in Kazakh society and increased Russophobia among media users:



*If a Russian swears at you and threatens to kill you or steal from you, it is not him! Most likely someone is setting him up, he’s probably a puppet of the West and neo-Nazis. You probably did it yourself<sup>29</sup>.*

*They hacked him? I don’t believe him! Especially since Shoigu<sup>30</sup> expressed the same opinion about the USSR, its greatness and all sorts of nonsense. Moreover, the hackers usually don’t write out many details on so many pages. He is lying it was a deliberate threat<sup>31</sup>.*

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.nur.kz/world/1981349-vzlo-mom-obyasnil-pomoschnik-medvedeva-ego-provokatsionnyy-post-vkontakte/>

<sup>28</sup> [https://t.me/rf200\\_nooow/8629](https://t.me/rf200_nooow/8629)

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cg1SYngstng/>

<sup>30</sup> Sergei Kuzhugetovich Shoigu is a Russian politician who has served as the minister of defence of Russia since 2012 (source: <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20220304-shoigu-and-gerasimov-masters-of-putin-s-wars>).

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/dosyms/posts/pfbid0omVieqcRZWT8eT94ogxAjiPxQQszD2j7K7koyr3ba4JfYKUGYKqf7h2pmTcqqokl>

## Status of the Kazakh and Russian languages

Due to the geopolitical crisis, the Kazakhstani population has increased the demand for strengthening and cultivating their own identity, promoting their culture, traditions and above all the Kazakh language. Therefore, any form of discrimination against the national language results in a strong negative reaction from society. The most illustrative case study on this topic is a statement by businessman Ramil Mukhoryapov, founder of Chocofamily<sup>32</sup>. At a meeting with Russian migrants, he commented on the situation where a person speaking Russian receives a response in Kazakh:



*“If this were to happen, I would personally be extremely saddened. Except in a situation where the person really doesn’t know Russian. Because it seems to me, it’s still a little bit strange. Some form of nationalism. It could be accepted, but he is definitely not a well-educated person” - the businessman wrote.*

This statement caused a wave of indignation and led to increased interethnic discord and further intolerance of the Russian language. Moreover, many users declared that they would boycott Chocofamily.

Later, Ramil Mukhoryapov was prosecuted<sup>33</sup> in the comments beneath an

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.nur.kz/society/1993587-osnovatel-chocofamily-okazalsya-v-tsentre-skandala-iz-za-vyskazyvaniy-o-kazahskom-yazyke/>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.currenttime.tv/a/kazakhstan-muharyapov/32105798.html>

article on incitement to hatred (part 1, article 174 of the Criminal Code) for his remarks about “nationalism” and the Kazakh language.

### **Migrants and Russophobia**

This topic is also related to the war in Ukraine, more specifically the mass exodus of Russians fleeing from army mobilisation in September and October 2022. Due to the large influx of Russians, housing rent has risen sharply and there have been cases where tenants have been evicted to allow landlord to rent accommodation at a higher price. Moreover, some citizens have expressed fear regarding the increased competition for job positions. People who did not support the war also spoke out against the arrival of the Russians. These sentiments were also actively expressed in the comments ([https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan\\_news/skolko-rossiyan-ejednevno-priezjaet-v-kazahstan-480735/](https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/skolko-rossiyan-ejednevno-priezjaet-v-kazahstan-480735/)) of social media users<sup>34</sup>.

- Airfares have become expensive because of them.
- Out-of-town students suffer because of this influx.
- It is a matter of fact that there are more of them, so why underestimate them? They are not welcome.

### **Gender discrimination**

The topic of gender inequality is very pertinent in Kazakhstan’s patriarchal society. Monitoring media publications as well as the tone of news coverage concerning women reveals

<sup>34</sup> [https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan\\_news/skolko-rossiyan-ejednevno-priezjaet-v-kazahstan-480735/](https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/skolko-rossiyan-ejednevno-priezjaet-v-kazahstan-480735/)

how women’s position in society is heavily stereotyped. This portrayal in the media normalises discrimination against women.

Often, news stories about the “undignified” behaviour of women are published with clickbait headlines, providing details that are not directly related to the described event. Moreover, in cases of violence towards women or children, either the victim or the mother of the victim is often blamed. Victim blaming is one of the most widespread problems and is mostly encountered in hate speech monitoring.

In 2022, Kazakhstan and the Central Asian states faced new geopolitical and information dissemination challenges: armed conflicts on the border, Russia’s war in Ukraine, propaganda and disinformation. All these threats led to increased polarisation and intolerance among Kazakhstani citizens. The low level of media literacy is one of the key factors aggravating socio-political tensions. This is why there is a need to promote MIL competencies in all educational institutions through cooperation with civil society organisations.



The Tajik media is mainly represented by the social network Facebook and then by other social networks like Instagram. Tajikistan’s largest media outlets, Asia Plus and Radio Liberty follow strict editorial standards and generally do not use hate speech. However, the measures in place do not prevent ordinary users from using their material as opportunities to post comments containing hate speech. For example, hate speech



increases sharply during political or social events and people often express strong emotional reactions in the comments.

In 2022 in Tajikistan, the most sensitive topics became the conflicts at the Kyrgyz-Tajik border, religion, corruption, migration, events in the region of Pamir and the violation of children's and women's rights. The turbulent situation in the neighbouring country of Afghanistan did not leave people indifferent.

### **War in Ukraine**

In the Tajik-language media segment people were divided into two factions, some supported and continue to support the war, and some were opposed to it. It is common knowledge that a large flow of Tajik migrants live and work in Russia and therefore when military events involving this country are reported in the media, it does not leave the Tajik audience indifferent. Moreover, the situation affects the migrants' families financially, as remittances are often their only source of income. After the announcement of a special military operation by Russia and the imposition of sanctions against Russia by almost all the countries in Europe and America, the exchange rate has been very low, which has also greatly affected the migrants' income and Tajikistan's economy in general.

### **Freedom of speech**

In 2022, several well-known journalists were arrested in Tajikistan. They were kept in pre-trial detention for several months and even their relatives were unable to see them for a long time. Almost all the detainees were charged under Article 307 (Ar-

ticle 307 of the Criminal Code "Public Calls for Forcible Changing the Constitutional System of the Republic of Tajikistan" refers to Section XIII of the Criminal Code of Tajikistan, relating to crimes against state power, and Chapter 29 "Crimes Against Basic Principles of the Constitutional System and State Security").

Civil society and Tajik citizens were outraged and they expressed their resentment towards the authorities and state structures through hate speech online. All their protests were in vain, and almost all of the detained journalists received heavy sentences in court rulings. This news created a storm of negativity on the internet, mainly on Facebook, where articles and other forms of media relating to the news were published<sup>35</sup>.

### **Events in the Pamirs**

Alarming events continue to occur in Gorno-Badakhshan: the situation has not yet stabilised, the power structures are active, and it has been proven that some public figures have used their influence over the people for their own selfish ends. They have been financed by terrorist groups that Tajikistan has banned. Media Asia Plus refused to report further on the events in the region of Pamir for fear that the general prosecutor's office might close down the media. Several hate speech messages were identified related to these events.

---

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/174906359256843/posts/5307934165954011/>

<https://www.facebook.com/128878693843929/posts/5564253220306422/>

<https://www.facebook.com/128878693843929/posts/5567979583267119/>



---

*–“They act like traitors, don’t they learn from Afghanistan?”<sup>36</sup>*

---

## **Gender equality and domestic violence**

Gender inequality and domestic violence are among the most pressing and acute problems faced by the country. Tajik families are mainly governed by “patriarchal” laws. Especially in recent years, cases of violence in young families have increased, resulting in girls committing suicide. Despite the adoption of a law on domestic violence, suicides are not uncommon. Mother-in-laws and the husband’s family can drive young women to such a miserable state that they commit suicide at the same time as killing their own children or it results in repeated suicide attempts. At the same time, society continues to keep blaming woman for everything, for not obeying her husband, her mother-in-law, or someone else in the husband’s family.

For example, Manora, a 25-year-old resident of Faizabad District, died as a result of severe blood loss after suffering 26 stab wounds. Manora was left to die in the presence of her three children. After numerous investigations by the Prosecutor General’s Office and various forensic medical examinations, the cause of death was established. The messages below are some of the responses to hearing this case:

---

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/174906359256843/posts/5213571625390266/>



---

*Why did she live in a rented apartment, and not with her husband’s relatives, who were given children, what’s the matter with them if no one helped during her lifetime? In general, all the young women have gone crazy, drowning, hanging themselves, poisoning, and even killing children, it’s not a pity for such fools at all, how can you kill your children, so small and helpless ... What do they have to do with it, why give birth to three, four, if they are not able to cope with such a load...? They are not mothers, in my personal opinion... They are the Beast...”<sup>37</sup>*

---

## **The conflict at the border of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan**

The most high-profile event that was reported at an international level and which resulted in conflict between the leaders of the two countries, is the Tajik-Kyrgyz border conflict. On September 14 this year, the Kyrgyz side opened fire on civilian homes in the early morning hours. The day after this tragic event a bloody conflict erupted in Isfara and the villages at the border. As a result, young children and a pregnant woman were killed, and an ambulance was shelled and burned down. As soon as the two sides signed peace agreements, a couple of hours later, during evening prayers, a mosque was shelled, resulting in many casualties. Following the shelling in Isfara, in retaliation, many civilians were killed in their houses, which were reduced to rubble and burnt to the ground. People tried

---

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/128878693843929/posts/5309724149092665/>

to hide in basements and were left homeless without a roof over their heads. The situation caused great emotional turmoil, with each side accusing the other and even journalists on both sides spreading fake news. The Kyrgyz authorities later at the UN conference blamed Tajikistan for what had happened. In the meetings with other Central Asian presidents and Vladimir Putin, the presidents of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan blanked each other. The situation remains unstable to this day<sup>38</sup>.

### **Mobilisation and relocated Russian**

The news of Russia's partial mobilisation in Ukraine caused widespread turmoil. Russian people, especially men, started fleeing the country on mass, buying tickets, walking across the borders and leaving everything behind. Ticket prices skyrocketed. Tajikistan received an enormous influx of visitors: across the country, there were no more hotel rooms or flats available for rent in the big cities. The large flow of Russian migrants caused the population to be divided. One side called the Russians deserters for abandoning their homeland at a difficult moment. The second group reacted positively to the fact that Russians had chosen to leave their homes behind rather than enrolling to fight and kill their brothers. One of the contributors to the anti-Russian attitude and general resentment is that when Tajik migrants emigrate to Russia to find work, they have difficulty finding accommodation as many Russians refuse to rent

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/128878693843929/posts/5514851635246581/> Bunasfa Malakhova

their accommodation to natives of Central Asia, and tend to call them obscene words and promote xenophobic expressions, such as: "Russia for Russians", "Churki", "Jamshut"<sup>39</sup>, "Flat for rental to people of Slavic appearance" and so on.

The rhetoric of hatred was also fuelled by the view that "*the guests will leave, and the price of accommodation will continue to be high*"<sup>40</sup>.



*«All this is missing. a ton of nationalities occupied the land, the list is very very long, but these fascists say that Russia has never attacked others. Tatars, Bashkirs, Chuvashs, Chechens, Dagestanis, Maris, Mordovians, Kalmyks, Yakuts, Buryats, Ingush, Tu- vans, Karachais, Komi, Adygea, Noga- is, Circassians, Khakasses, Karelians, etc. live in Russia ... I wonder how they became part of Russia if she did not attack? How did the Russians find themselves in Central Asia? Propaganda is so strong that often some Central Asians themselves re- peat this»*

*«only cowards and traitors can say so. Such people will not fight for their Motherland either, they sit at home and chatter with their tongues.»<sup>41</sup>*

<sup>39</sup> "Jamshut" is a pejorative word used to denote workers who come to Russia from Central Asia (source: <https://ru.wiktionary.org/wiki/%D0%94%D0%B6%D0%B0%D0%B- C%D1%88%D1%83%D1%82>)

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/128878693843929/posts/5528908093840935/>

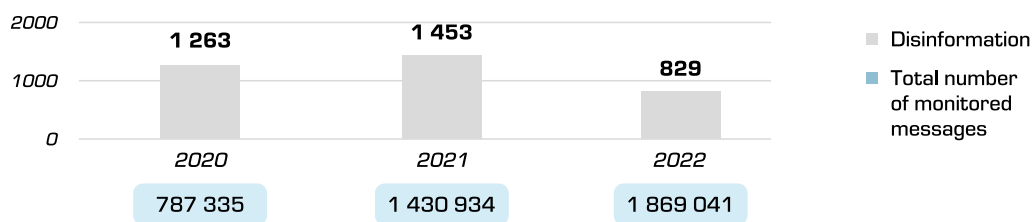
<sup>41</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/128878693843929/posts/5528908093840935/>



# Disinformation in Central Asia

Over the past year, the project media monitors identified 829 cases of “disinformation” in the articles and posts they assessed. Disinformation mainly focused on the coronavirus, population immunisation campaigns

and border conflicts. Phishing and conspiracy theories also dominated. Below we focus on the situation in each country and present the main disinformation themes and discussion points in Central Asia.



The material presented in this section is based on real examples of fake news collected by our media monitors.

The false information was promptly refuted by fact-checkers and government agencies, but despite these efforts, it still spread virally.



## Kyrgyzstan

Disinformation in the Kyrgyz media space is rather diverse. During the

monitoring period, unreliable information related to political events inside and outside the country was disseminated as well as so called “harmless” fake news stories (with little or no serious consequences for the financial state and/or health of the audience) and phishing emails from different companies and organizations about large money prizes.

Disinformation and fake news stories in Kyrgyzstan’s media outlets are found in blogs which are not official sources of information. Most of them are simply Instagram pages that copy

fresh news without filtering or verifying the contents. They are immediately recognisable with their flashy news headlines and captivating images.

## COVID-19

Although the coronavirus has almost disappeared from the headlines, fake news stories about it and about vaccines are still being actively promoted in the media space as “zombie” fakes – fake news that pop up from time to time in the media, even after fact checking has been carried out. So, in January 2022 this kind of information was spread again on social networks: a new strain of Omicron<sup>42</sup> was allegedly sprayed over the cities. Another post informs us that a memorial dedicated to those affected by the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines has been created<sup>43</sup>.

There was also news about the risk of contracting COVID-19 for people with beards; apparently it increases the risk by a thousand times<sup>44</sup>.

These fake stories started appearing in the media in 2020 and 2021 and continue to circulate to this day. For instance, in 2021, the Kyrgyz Minister of Health, Alymkadyr Beishenaliev, stated that coronavirus could be treated with aconite, the poisonous

root found in Issyk-Kul<sup>45</sup>. After Alymkadyr Beishenaliev was removed from office, the acting Minister of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic, Jarkynbek Kasymbekov, stated that it was wrong to recommend aconite in the treatment of coronavirus and that aconite was not a clinically tested medicine<sup>46</sup>. However, despite this correction, the readers’ comments show how misinformed they were.



**Almaz Rakhatbekov:** “This is not Beishenaliev who suggested it but the president . He talked about it while in prison.”

**Zamira Dogdurbaevna:** “You need to be able to take aconite correctly. It is a cure for many diseases. No one badmouths Beishenaliev”.

**Anima Alimzhanova:** “The Issyk-Kul root has long been used as a medicine. And now it’s being used.”

The same assessment of the Kyrgyz audience failing to be properly informed can be applied to the development of 5G. Merely the mention of this technological advancement in the news caused a lot of anxiety. In August 2022, news that Kyrgyzstan was allowed to test 5G technology

<sup>42</sup> <https://kloop.kg/blog/2022/01/14/minzdrav-raspylenie-koronavirusa-s-neba-samoletom-ili-vertoletom-fejk>

<sup>43</sup> <https://factcheck.kg/sushhestvuet-li-memorial-posvyashhennyj-postradavshim-ot-pobochnyh-dejstvij-vakczin-proveryaem/>

<sup>44</sup> <https://factcheck.kg/boroda-velichivaet-v-tsyachu-raz-risk-podhvatit-koronavirus-proveryaem/>

<sup>45</sup> Issyk-Kul is an endorheic lake (i.e., a lake with no evident outlet) in the Northern Tian Shan mountains in Eastern Kyrgyzstan. (source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Issyk-Kul>)

<sup>46</sup> [https://www.azattyk.org/a/31990945.html?fbclid=IwAR3s\\_1BhH1Kn\\_st3CJsaape-Ch4LHaqrHbfGMXCsDZq2170wIYCj4ZRCE-cAk](https://www.azattyk.org/a/31990945.html?fbclid=IwAR3s_1BhH1Kn_st3CJsaape-Ch4LHaqrHbfGMXCsDZq2170wIYCj4ZRCE-cAk)

spread quickly<sup>47</sup>. There is neither disinformation in the news piece itself, nor any fake news that could provoke fear, but the comments below it show the level of disinformation spread among the Kyrgyz audience.



**Nazgul Isakova:** “Why don’t they ask the people whether they agree to becoming guinea pigs?”

**Janyl Myrza Kyzy:** “Testing on people leads to new types of diseases. Everything gets destroyed for the sake of money”

**Sakulya Duisheva:** “Then you need to throw away the phones and not use them”

## Cyber fraud or phishing

Mass mailings on behalf of large organisations, with links to “prank” and “survey” pages, are also popular among WhatsApp users. Often this type of message communicates to the reader that they are eligible to receive funding from various commercial and charitable companies. For example, a fake message about the distribution of \$1.7 billion to Islamic believers in need around the world was distributed by fraudsters pretending to be the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)<sup>48</sup>. Another spam email informed individuals that the World Bank Group was donating

<sup>47</sup> [https://www.azattyk.org/a/31978598.html?fbclid=IwAR2Yk-o8saWNpaQ0kpN-cuZYWUMGaklhTnOGWX3VtqnDVIWIoDOJ-VI\\_NS0Qo](https://www.azattyk.org/a/31978598.html?fbclid=IwAR2Yk-o8saWNpaQ0kpN-cuZYWUMGaklhTnOGWX3VtqnDVIWIoDOJ-VI_NS0Qo)

<sup>48</sup> <https://factcheck.kg/razdacha-deneg-nuzhdayushhimsya-ot-organizaczii-islamsko-go-sotrudnichestva-proveryaem/>

\$750 million to eradicate poverty<sup>49</sup>. In both cases, the message structure and content are identical, asking users to click on a link and fill out a questionnaire. Sometimes users are asked to answer questions in order to receive a cash prize. For instance, internet fraudsters pretending to be the Kumtor Gold Company distributed information about a campaign to celebrate the company’s 30th anniversary: users who answered the questions correctly would receive a prize of 10,000 Kyrgyz Soms (about \$120)<sup>50</sup>.

## Politics

The prevalence of fake information and disinformation is particularly high during armed clashes, border conflicts, etc. Thus, in connection with the events in neighbouring Kazakhstan in January 2022, the Internet was flooded with a huge amount of unreliable and fake information. For example, news blogs reported that a private plane belonging to Nursultan Nazarbayev’s son-in-law was on its way to Kyrgyzstan. Another news account posted the same screenshot, but with information that Nazarbayev’s daughter, Dinara, was travelling to Kyrgyzstan<sup>51</sup>.

Following the protests in Kazakhstan, WhatsApp was flooded with messages that Kazakh banks would go bankrupt in the next 10-15 days and therefore everyone needed to with-

<sup>49</sup> <https://factcheck.kg/rassylka-ot-moshennikov-kyrgyzstanczam-razdadut-750-mln-ot-vsemirnogo-banka/>

<sup>50</sup> [https://kaktus.media/doc/455796\\_po-whatsapp\\_gylyaet\\_feyk\\_o\\_kymtor\\_gold\\_kompani.html](https://kaktus.media/doc/455796_po-whatsapp_gylyaet_feyk_o_kymtor_gold_kompani.html)

<sup>51</sup> <https://factcheck.kg/samolet-nazvanij-nazarbaevskim-letit-ne-v-kyrgyzstan/>

draw all their money from “Optima Bank” and “Halyk Bank” accounts<sup>52</sup>.

A few Kazakhstani publicity groups spread fake information about Kyrgyzstani citizens participating in pogroms (ethnic violence) and looting in Almaty<sup>53</sup>.

A surge of fake information was also recorded during the border conflict between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Here are some examples of news stories that were disseminated though they do not correspond to reality:

- Information on Kyrgyzstan’s alleged use of Turkish-produced Bayraktar drones by Turkey<sup>54</sup>
- Report about the head of Kyrgyzstan’s State Committee for National Security Kamchybek Tashiev being taken hostage<sup>55</sup>
- Kyrgyz soldiers destroying civilian houses<sup>56</sup>
- Did Kyrgyzstan refuse to negoti-

<sup>52</sup> <https://factcheck.kg/nuzhno-li-srochno-snimat-dengi-s-schetov-optima-bank-i-halyk-bank-faktchek/>

<sup>53</sup> [https://kaktus.media/doc/452332\\_kazahstanskije\\_pabliki\\_rasprostranijaut\\_feyk\\_ob\\_ychastii\\_kyrgyzstancev\\_v\\_pogromah\\_v\\_almaty.html](https://kaktus.media/doc/452332_kazahstanskije_pabliki_rasprostranijaut_feyk_ob_ychastii_kyrgyzstancev_v_pogromah_v_almaty.html)

<sup>54</sup> <https://bulak.kg/2022/09/17/faktchek-informatsiya-ob-ispolzovanii-bajraktar-so-storony-kyrgyzstana-yavlyaetsya-fejkovoj/>

<sup>55</sup> <https://bishkek24.kg/obshhestvo/kamchybek-tashiev-nahoditsya-v-batkenskoj-oblasti-soobshhenie-o-vzyatii-ego-v-zalozhniki-fejk/>

<sup>56</sup> <https://factcheck.kg/kyrgyzstanskije-soldaty-razrushili-doma-mirnyh-zhitelej-nepravda/>

ate with the Tajik side<sup>57</sup>?

- Information on the death of Emomali Rahmon, president of Tajikistan<sup>58</sup>
- Information on Kazakhstan providing military equipment to Kyrgyzstan<sup>59</sup>

Disinformation is very dangerous and harmful to the state structure, national security, and individual citizens who are at risk of being deceived. However, no international document approves the use of combating disinformation as a method of selective repression. It should also be noted that any law enacted in a country should not contradict the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Constitution of the country, which cannot be said about the situation in Kyrgyzstan and other Central Asian countries. Last year, Kyrgyzstan adopted a scandalous law to ensure “the Protection of citizens from Inaccurate (False) Information”, which began to be actively enforced in 2022. This year, the law has been enforced in order to accuse three websites of allegedly disseminating inaccurate information. In July, the authorities suspended the website of the “Respublica” newspa-

<sup>57</sup> <https://factcheck.kg/kyrgyzstan-otkazovalsya-ot-peregovorov-s-tadzhikskoj-storonoj-nepravda/>

<sup>58</sup> [https://kaktus.media/doc/467864\\_v\\_socsetiah\\_deliatsia\\_informaciy\\_o\\_smerti\\_emomali\\_rahmona\\_gosorgany\\_rt\\_ne\\_podtverjdaut.html](https://kaktus.media/doc/467864_v_socsetiah_deliatsia_informaciy_o_smerti_emomali_rahmona_gosorgany_rt_ne_podtverjdaut.html)

<sup>59</sup> <https://tmedia.kg/2022/09/17>

per<sup>60</sup>. In August, the Ministry of Culture ordered that the the website of news agency 24.kg be suspended but reversed its decision the same day<sup>61</sup>. The most scandalous case involved the Kyrgyz' treatment of Radio Liberty (Azattyk) when Kyrgyz authorities denied internet users access to the Azattyk website for two months. The reason behind this suspension was due to a story that was broadcast relating to new clashes at the Kyrgyz-Tajik border in which dozens of people died and thousands were forced to temporarily evacuate their homes<sup>62</sup>.



Misinformation in Uzbek media outlets can be divided into three main categories.

### **Pharmacological advertisements and viruses**

The primary category of misinformation and the most widespread involves pharmacological advertisements for various medicines and dietary supplements that make false claims about their properties.

In Uzbekistan a fake article became widespread which claimed that it is necessary to avoid taking paracetamol tablets with the inscription "P / 500" on the package, since the drug contains a virus. The Ministry of Health said that this information is

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.vzglyad.kg/>

<sup>61</sup> <https://24.kg/>.

<sup>62</sup> [https://kaktus.media/doc/469949\\_pochemy\\_blokirovka\\_azattyka\\_v\\_kr\\_eto\\_dyrnoy\\_znak\\_v\\_pervyu\\_ochered\\_dlia\\_samih\\_vlastey.html](https://kaktus.media/doc/469949_pochemy_blokirovka_azattyka_v_kr_eto_dyrnoy_znak_v_pervyu_ochered_dlia_samih_vlastey.html)

completely unfounded. In addition, the Ministry reminded the public that any medicine, including paracetamol, should be taken only if recommended by a doctor. Rumors about "infected pills" circulate regularly on social networks<sup>63</sup>.

Social networks also spread a news article which reported the death of 23 children in one day in the Bukhara region, who died after taking Cinepar cough syrup. The Ministry of Health reported that this information has no basis. Among the children who were treated in medical institutions in the Bukhara region, there were no cases of death due to the use of this drug<sup>64</sup>.

Fake news also made the citizens of Uzbekistan worry about their health when rumours were spread about cholera contaminating their water pipes and taps<sup>65</sup>.

### **Religion**

The second major category of misinformation is characterized by various religious fake publications that enforce strict adherence to archaic religious traditions. There are also many fake publications of a religious nature, with sexist content, forcing women to wear hijabs, to obey their husbands unconditionally, to refuse to wear make-up altogether, etc.

There were reports on social networks that on September 8, during

<sup>63</sup> <https://nuz.uz/zdorove/1264581-v-uzbekistane-snova-rasprostranyayut-sluhi-o-paracetamole-s-virusom.html>

<sup>64</sup> <https://nuz.uz/zdorove/1266412-min-zdrav-zayavil-cto-soobshhenie-o-gibeli-23-detej-v-buhare-iz-za-upotrebleniya-siropa-cinepar-fejk.html>

<sup>65</sup> <https://t.me/uzsuv/6496>

a hashar (a day when all employees are required to clean up their surroundings) at the ancient site of the Khazrat Ali temple in the village of Sarikand, in the Sokh region, treasure with gold coins weighing a total of around a kilogram was discovered. Upon the request of the Khokimiyat, this story was commented on by the chairman of the Mahalla gathering of citizens Hazrat Ali, Suvkhonali Nishonov. He explained that on September 8, 2021, hashar was indeed organized and took place on the site surrounding the shrine. However, no gold was ever found<sup>66</sup>.

### Karakalpak events

Also in the Uzbek and Central Asian media analysed there was a lot of disinformation and conspiracy theories regarding the events that took place in Karakalpakstan. The messages mostly consisted of hate rhetoric mingled with disinformation. Social networks were circulating photos and videos that allegedly show the bloody streets of Nukus. According to official data, these publications are fakes<sup>67</sup>.



### Kazakhstan

In 2022, disinformation regarding a variety of different topics was disseminated in Kazakhstan's media. During the tragic events at the beginning of the year related to the protests, there was an internet blackout in the Country, which created an information vacuum. When the

<sup>66</sup> <https://nuz.uz/.../1208324-nahodka-kilogramma-zolotyh...>

<sup>67</sup> [https://t.me/Rasmiy\\_xabarlar\\_Official/27507](https://t.me/Rasmiy_xabarlar_Official/27507)

Internet started functioning again, a flood of fake media footage emerged in various formats (audio, video, images, and WhatsApp messages), feeding on the fears of the audience. The most popular was a fake story about "Arystan (NSC)"<sup>68</sup> which was allegedly spying on WhatsApp users in various chats. Disinformation about the coronavirus and the negative impact of the vaccine continues to circulate. Themes such as "Bill Gates", "5G towers", "chipping", "magnet", "reduction of the human population on earth", "distance control", "chemtrails", "virus dispersal" and similar fake zombie stories are also popular. Disinformation about the man-made origin of the coronavirus and its nonexistence is also spreading.

### The January events and Vikram Ruzakhunov

During the January events, disinformation was spread about the Kyrgyz musician Vikram Ruzakhunov. Unverified information was leaked on state television channels and via various other information outlets. The musician Vikram Ruzakhunov was portrayed as one of the people who took part in the January events for money.

Disinformation was spread about a Kyrgyz citizen who had taken part in the events and was allegedly a marauder. Dicky Arman accused Kyrgyz citizens on social media and swore they would be punished. The channel broadcast the story about the musician, again and again portraying Kyrgyzstan as a guilty merciless nation.

<sup>68</sup> The Arystan ("Lions") Commando Unit (Russian: специального назначения «Арыстан») is a special forces unit of the Office of the NSC and the armed forces (source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National\\_Security\\_Committee\\_\(Kazakhstan\)#Arystan\\_Commando\\_Unit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Security_Committee_(Kazakhstan)#Arystan_Commando_Unit)).



After the Internet came back online a message that claimed to come from the “Arystan KNB” was actively spread via chat rooms and social media. According to the message, there would be “new communication rules” regarding phone calls, and calls and messages on WhatsApp that meant they would be recorded and all devices would be connected to the “departmental wiretapping and government CDMX service systems”. This turned out to be an old fake message and some Kazakh websites like Factcheck.kz and Stopfake.kz have refuted the information<sup>69</sup>.

### Coronavirus and vaccination

When coronavirus started to spread, conspiracy theories on the subject also emerged. The most famous theory claims that it is an artificial man-made virus. No matter how much reliable information is made available including statistics on the disease’s mortality rate, so many people still continue to believe in this conspiracy theory. Some believe that the virus was created in a laboratory in order to reduce the world’s population and to prevent problems arising from a lack of resources in the future in European states, thus reducing the number of elderly people, etc. Here are some examples of the fake news stories identified by the media monitors: the International Court in The Hague allegedly recognized the COVID-19 pandemic as genocide<sup>70</sup>, SARS-CoV-2 is apparently a biological weapon<sup>71</sup>, the new Covid variant “Centaurus” was allegedly invented

<sup>69</sup> <https://factcheck.kz/socium/fejk-arystan-knb-vse-ustrojstva-podklyucheny-k-vedomstvennym-sistemam-proslushki/>

<sup>70</sup> <https://stopfake.kz/ru/archives/11085>

<sup>71</sup> <https://stopfake.kz/ru/archives/11106>

by the WHO<sup>72</sup>, which will propagate the pandemic for 10 years<sup>73</sup>, documents from CIA show that COVID-19 is a blood disease<sup>74</sup>, COVID-19 is not transmissible from person to person<sup>75</sup>, COVID-19 was invented to impose new ideas on people<sup>76</sup> and the most unlikely fake article which started to spread in July which claimed that the COVID-19 outbreak was triggered by aliens<sup>77</sup>, etc. Despite the WHO’s efforts to limit the spread of the coronavirus and measures being implemented on a global scale by the respective Ministries of Health, the doctors and specialists working in this field do not seem to have earned the credibility one would expect. Some Kazakh sites like Factcheck.kz and Stopfake.kz have publicly denied the claims, but fake news continues to be spread.

Various videos spreading disinformation about vaccines such as Pfizer and Moderna, QazVac, Sinovac and Sputnik V also continue to circulate. Vaccination was officially authorised in early 2021, and since then the inaccurate information linked to these protective measures has not stopped. From news stories that claim the vaccine is ineffective to spreading the idea that vaccine programmes are a subversive way of administering chip implants. No matter how frequently this information has been refuted, the negative sentiment about the vaccine among the public has not changed. Consequently, many peo-

<sup>72</sup> <https://stopfake.kz/ru/archives/13756>

<sup>73</sup> <https://stopfake.kz/ru/archives/13935>

<sup>74</sup> <https://stopfake.kz/ru/archives/14247>

<sup>75</sup> <https://stopfake.kz/ru/archives/14414>

<sup>76</sup> <https://stopfake.kz/ru/archives/14503>

<sup>77</sup> <https://stopfake.kz/ru/archives/13676>

ple did not believe in the protection offered by the vaccines and bought fake vaccination passports. Distrust among the population was fuelled by the disinformation that was easily spread via various chat rooms, especially on WhatsApp.

## War in Ukraine and War in General

After Russia invaded Ukraine on 24 February, Kazakhstan's media were filled with fake news and propaganda on this topic, this includes stories about events in Ukraine and the personality of the Ukrainian president. This could be seen as an information war. Many fake news stories have been propagated about the war between Russia and Ukraine, and also about the neighbouring states. The following examples were uncovered: Vladimir Putin's deepfake "about the results of the Ukrainian-Russian meeting", in which the President clearly state that the negotiations ended favourably for the Russian side, went viral on the net<sup>78</sup>, Kazakh military equipment was allegedly sent to Ukraine<sup>79</sup>, A Chinese TV broadcast showed a map of Russia divided<sup>80</sup>, Zelensky was allegedly caught with cocaine on the table<sup>81</sup>.

There was also various stories about people fleeing army mobilisation,

<sup>78</sup> <https://factcheck.kz/v-mire/dipfej-k-vladimira-putina-s-itogami-ukrainsko-rossijskoj-vstrechi-rasxoditsya-v-seti/>

<sup>79</sup> <https://stopfake.kz/ru/archives/11804>

<sup>80</sup> <https://factcheck.kz/fact-checking/mify-i-pravda/pravda-li-cto-na-kitajskom-tel-evidenii-pokazali-kartu-razdela-rossii/>

<sup>81</sup> <https://www.google.com/url?q=https://factcheck.kz/dekonstrukciya-propagandy/fej-k-zelenskogo-zastukali-s-kokainom-na-stole/&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1672299092132932&usg=AOvVaw13TtJCjFUcStqk-tVCIdEul>

such as a huge traffic jam on the border between Russia and Kazakhstan, among others<sup>82</sup>.

## Use of brand names and fraud

Defrauding people on social media, especially on WhatsApp, using the name of a well-known company or brand, is apparently one of the current trends. There have been various cases where criminals, taking advantage of the brand's credibility, have collected data and stolen money from credit cards. For example, Kazakhstanis have been swindled by people pretending to be KazMunayGas<sup>83</sup>, KazMunayGas is obliged to pay 117 thousand tenge to Kazakhstanis monthly<sup>84</sup>, swindlers deceive Kazakhstanis by pretending to belong to a large network of pharmacies<sup>85</sup>, a fake newsletter on behalf of KEGOC was distributed on WhatsApp<sup>86</sup>, fraudsters use well-known names and brands to deceive Kazakhstanis, such as Kaspi Bank, Halyk Bank, Adidas, Nike, brand stores and there are even cases where fraudsters presented themselves as police officers working for investment companies<sup>87</sup>. Factcheck.kz denied in September<sup>88</sup>.

<sup>82</sup> <https://factcheck.kz/sluxi/ogromnaya-avtomobilnaya-probka-na-granice-rossii-i-kazaxstana-proverka-foto-ot-factcheck-kg/>

<sup>83</sup> <https://stopfake.kz/ru/archives/11905>

<sup>84</sup> <https://stopfake.kz/ru/archives/15061>

<sup>85</sup> <https://stopfake.kz/ru/archives/15009>

<sup>86</sup> <https://stopfake.kz/ru/archives/11890>

<sup>87</sup> <https://www.zakon.kz/6018387-mosheniki-predstavliaiutsia-sotrudnikami-politsii-abdrakhmanov-obratilsia-k-almatintsam.html>

<sup>88</sup> [https://www.google.com/url?q=https://factcheck.kz/sluxi/uchastvuj-i-vyigraj-5-fejkovyx-akcij-rasprostranyayushhixsya-v-whatsapp/&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1672300311837714&usg=AOvVaw32L10VHLX\\_w9oRwuuDMvkx](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://factcheck.kz/sluxi/uchastvuj-i-vyigraj-5-fejkovyx-akcij-rasprostranyayushhixsya-v-whatsapp/&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1672300311837714&usg=AOvVaw32L10VHLX_w9oRwuuDMvkx)



When it comes to the top 5 fake messages on WhatsApp, there have been cases of Kazakhstani people being cheated via Telegram by fraudsters pretending to be businessmen and bloggers. There have been cases of disinformation being spread by bloggers as well. In Kazakhstan, the audience tends to trust bloggers more than official sources, and this trust is abused by some.



## Tajikistan

In 2022, various disinformation and fake stories were detected in Tajik media outlets, the majority being repetitive spam messages in public chat rooms. However, the Tajik-Kyrgyz conflict which flared up again at the border in September, resulting in many casualties on both sides, resulted in a new wave of fake, manipulative and provocative news stories and disinformation.

### Bloody border conflict

On 18 September, the Bashtan Bash-ta Youtube channel released a video analysis<sup>89</sup> of NASA satellite images documenting fires in the bordering areas. This YouTube channel criticises Tajikistan for invading and conducting military operations mainly on Kyrgyzstan territory.

Factcheck.tj verified these claims using the same US National Aeronautics and Space Administration service called “FIRMS”<sup>90</sup>. An inspection by Tajik fact-checkers revealed that the

<sup>89</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLHGSp2WRI8>

<sup>90</sup> <http://firms.modaps.eosdis.nasa.gov/> - Fire Information for Resource Management System

video footage was manipulative and did not show the full picture<sup>91</sup>.

On 16 September, a video of the explosion of a vehicle<sup>92</sup> allegedly carrying fuel<sup>93</sup> was published on the Telegram channel “Chek ARA” (“ЧЕК АРА”)<sup>94</sup>. In the video, the voices of people speaking in Tajik can be heard while they flee from the explosion. The vehicle shown in the video has a Tajik number plate.

Some Kyrgyz users wrote in the comments under the video that the vehicle had been blown up by Kyrgyz border guards. One user wrote that “Tajik armoured vehicles are on fire”, and another user even wrote that “apparently the Bayraktar was launched”. A second group of users wrote that the video was an old one, debunking the fake.

According to an official information source on the 14 September, there was a clash between border guards at the “Bulakboshi” checkpoint of the Batken border which rapidly got out of hand. After two days, on 16 September the authorities reported<sup>95</sup> that the conflict was continuing (archive - <https://archive.vn/dFAhz>). Our fact-checkers were able to explain the extent to which this video is directly related to the recent border conflict and whether the car was

<sup>91</sup> <https://factcheck.tj/ru/2022/09/21/manipulyatsiya-voennyj-konflikt-razvora-chivaetsya-v-osnovnom-na-territorii-kyrgyzstana/>

<sup>92</sup> <https://t.me/c/1743011910/5368>

<sup>93</sup> archived at <https://archive.vn/LFYfz>

<sup>94</sup> <https://t.me/batken1/1234> - Kyrgyz channel

<sup>95</sup> <https://khovar.tj/2022/09/markazi-matbuoti-shun-oi-sar-adii-kdam-um-urii-toikiston-habar-medi-ad-2/>

actually blown up by Kyrgyz border guards: the video was fake and has nothing to do with the recent border conflict between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan<sup>96</sup>.

### **Fakes linked to the president of the Republic of Tajikistan**

On 19 September 2022, an active Facebook user from Kyrgyzstan Bejan Asanbekov wrote on his Facebook page that the Tajik President Emomali Rahmon was about to address the people of his country the same day, but the speech was cancelled because he had a stroke<sup>97</sup> archive - <https://archive.ph/4R1kv>) and in the group “Latest Information”

---

<sup>96</sup> <https://factcheck.tj/ru/2022/09/21/manipulyatsiya-voennyj-konflikt-razvorchivaetsya-v-osnovnom-na-territorii-kyrgyzstana/>

<sup>97</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=876182516700816&id=100029272277002](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=876182516700816&id=100029272277002) (archive - <https://archive.ph/4R1kv>)

(«Последняя информация»)<sup>98</sup>, reaching more than 148,000 users.



---

*“Today there was supposed to be an address to the nation by President Emomali Rahmon of the Republic of Tajikistan.*

*But according to insider information, the event has been cancelled as Emomali Rahmon has suffered a stroke and is in an extremely serious condition.*

*The country is expected to be in chaos and the government is confused. This is what many chats in the Tajik Telegram Channel segment are saying<sup>99</sup>.*

---

<sup>98</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/groups/maly-mattar/posts/3333965800265126/> (archive - <https://archive.fo/1wliY>)

<sup>99</sup> <https://factcheck.tj/ru/2022/09/20/fej-rahmon-poluchil-insult-i-nahoditsya-v-krajne-tyazhelom-sostoyanii/>

## Conclusions

Considering the amount of data and information processed (the team of media monitors from four different countries analysed 1,869,041 messages in one year), it is very difficult to provide a thorough analysis of how information has been shaped and presented to the audiences in the target countries. However, in this report we have presented some of our major findings concerning the different trends of hate speech and disinformation that our media monitors identified.

To summarise, in 2022, Central Asia, found itself under influence of political propaganda, an infodemic (active anti-vaxxers and conspiracy theory advocates), sexism, Islamophobia relating to the situation in Afghanistan and Russophobia in relation to the war in Ukraine.

In regards to hate speech, we would like to highlight a repeating pattern in disinformation trends. Important themes such as ethnic, national, and religious issues were present but we also detected themes linked to gender equality and language issues (Russian vs. local languages). of the disinformation trends of 2022 appear to repeat those reported in 2020 and 2021.

The BRYCA project team urges everyone to be vigilant when disseminating any information, to check the source, to become media literate and not to resort to hate speech.

### Disclaimer:

This overview is based on the findings of a media monitoring conducted as part of the BRYCA project “ Building Resistance in Youth in Central Asia to the influence of illegal hate speech and misinformation online and on social media “. Media monitoring has been conducted since January 2020 in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The examples provided in the report are based on the results of media monitoring<sup>100</sup>.

The BRYCA project is implemented with the financial support of the European Union. All examples presented in the survey are for informational purposes only. We are categorically against the use of hate speech of any type.

This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the responsibility of the BRYCA media monitoring team and do not reflect the views of the European Union.

Previous years' reports are available on the website: <https://mediasabak.org>

---

[1] [https://www.inform.kz/ru/sud-postanovil-arestovat-antivaksera-aynu-bakeevu-posle-incidenta-v-shkole-v-nur-sultane\\_a3854631](https://www.inform.kz/ru/sud-postanovil-arestovat-antivaksera-aynu-bakeevu-posle-incidenta-v-shkole-v-nur-sultane_a3854631)

---

<sup>100</sup> Further examples can be provided upon request

# List of selected and monitored online sources



## Kazakhstan

### Websites

1. newreporter.org
2. factcheck.kz
3. caravan.kz
4. tengrinews.kz
5. nur.kz
6. total.kz
7. zakon.kz
8. sputnik.kz
9. holanews.kz
10. 365info.kz
11. Egemen.kz
12. Aikyn.kz
13. Stan.kz
14. Qamshy.kz
15. Sn.kz
16. Baribar.kz
17. Alashainasy.kz
18. Qazaquni.kz
19. Jasqazaq.kz
20. Zhasalash.kz
21. Abai.kz
4. Под Небом Казахстана - VK
5. Raketa – VK
6. lada.kz - VK
7. Алматы. Что? Где? Когда? - Facebook
8. МЫ ТЮРКИ - Facebook
9. Кокшетау: Что? Где? Когда? - Facebook
10. Астана - Что? Где? Когда? “ - Facebook
11. Атамның басы-ай” - Facebook
12. “Дүниежүзі қазақтары” - Facebook
13. “Шындықтан қаша алмайсың” - Facebook
14. “Жаға ұстатты” - Facebook
15. “Қазақ ұлтшылдары” - Facebook
16. “ztb\_kz” - Instagram
17. “eapgram” - Instagram
18. “ZTB | Qazaqstan” – VK



### Social media pages and networks

1. Оян Казахстан - Facebook
2. Kok Team- Facebook
3. ДВД Алматы- Facebook



### Leaders of public opinion

1. Әміржан Қосанов
2. Мұхамеджан Тазабек
3. Айдос Сарым
4. Расул Жұмалы
5. Мұхтар Тайжан

6. Серік Абас-Шах
7. Айгүл Орынбек
8. Самат Сақ
9. Дина Елгезек
10. Сәкен Майғазиев
11. Ахметбек Нұрсила
12. Аятжан Ахметжанұлы
13. Жанболат Мамай
14. Ержан Рашев

15. Досым Сатпаев
16. Кайрат Кудайберген
17. Баян Алагузова
18. Денис Кривошеев
19. Нуртас Адамбаев
20. Алтай Байшулаков
21. Серікжан Есенғосұлы
22. Ермек Нарымбай



## Kyrgyzstan



### Websites

1. Kaktus Media
2. Kloop.kg
3. Akipress
4. K-news
5. 24.kg
6. Вечерний Бишкек
7. Sputnik.kg
8. Инфограм
9. Kyrgyz News
10. Новости Кыргызстана
11. Kyrgyz Azattyk Unalgysy
12. Супер инфо
13. Маалымат
14. Эл гезит
15. Next TV
16. Ачык Айкын
17. BBC News Кыргыз
18. Акипресс
19. TRT Kyrgyz

6. Авторынок Кыргызстана
7. OMK5
8. Черный список.
9. Нам не понравилось
10. DIESEL.ELCAT.KG
11. AKIpress
12. Kaktus Media
13. Azattyk Media
14. KLOOP



### Social media pages and networks

1. Новости Кыргызстана
2. Беспредел КГ
3. КОМПРОМАТ КГ
4. Кыргызстан 2020
5. Кабарчы КГ



### Leaders of public opinion

1. Дастан Бекешев
2. Алтын Капалова
3. Бектур Искендер
4. Гульмира Тыналиева
5. Мээрим Осмоналиева
6. Гульнура Торалиева
7. Кадыр Маликов
8. Пахман Валентина
9. Болот Ибрагимов
10. Улан Үсөйүн
11. Арстанбек Абдылдаев
12. Чубак ажы Жалилов
13. Рита Карасартова
14. Илим Карыпбеков
15. Асель Кадырбекова
16. Тимур Файзиев
17. Абдышукур Нарматов

 **Websites**

1. kun.uz
2. gazeta.uz
3. podrobno.uz
4. nuz.uz
5. spot.uz
6. anhor.uz
7. repost.uz
8. vot.uz
9. upl24.uz
10. uzdaily.uz
11. vkratce.uz
12. xabar.uz
13. vesti.uz
14. daryo.uz
15. qalampir.uz
16. mytube.uz
17. mover.uz
18. fergananews.com
19. centralasia.media
20. sputnik.uz
21. ozodlik.uz

 **Social media pages and networks**

1. Alter ego (Youtube link)
2. Women Empowerment Club Tashkent
3. mdk.uz
4. Наблюдения под чинарой
5. Портал молодежи  
Фешн терапия

6. Не молчи
7. Мастава
8. Потребитель.уз
9. Инсайдер
10. Столик с видом на планету
11. Дочь железного дракона
12. Pickuper UZ
13. TROLL UZ
14. Водители Ташкента (DRIVERS.UZ)
15. Потребитель плюс. Постим всё, что запрещено в группе Потребитель.уз

 **Leaders of public opinion**

1. Азиза Умарова
2. Комил Алламжонов
3. Шерзодхон Кудратходжа
4. Лола Каримова
5. Никита Макаренко
6. Ирина Матвиенко
7. Фернанда Манчини
8. Саша Иванюженко
9. Ферузхан Якубходжаев
10. Али Кахаров
11. Хушнудбек Худойбердиев
12. Нигора Акилова
13. Давлетов
14. Кирилл Альтман
15. Юлий Юсупов
16. Умид Гафуров



## Tajikistan

### Websites

1. Информационное агентство “Азия”
2. Национальное ИА “Ховар”
3. Информационное агенство “Авесто”
4. Сайт радио “Озоди”
5. Информационное агентсво “SugdNEWS”
6. Международное ИА “Sputnik”
7. Информационный сайт Таджикистана
8. Сайт газеты” Согдийская правда”
9. Сайт газеты “Вечерний Душанбе-Вечёрка”
10. Информационный сайт
11. Сайт газеты “Тоҷикистон”
12. Сайт газеты “Оила”
13. Сайт газеты “Фараж”
12. МЫ-ТАДЖИКИСТАНЦЫ! / МО -ТОҶИКИСТОНИЁН!
13. Ахбори Тоҷикистон-Новости Таджикистана-News of Tajikistan
14. Новости Центральной Азии/ Ахбори Осиёи Марказӣ/ Central Asian News
15. Ҷавонони Суғд – Youth of Sughd
16. АХБОР БАРОИ АҶКОР/ ИНФОРМАЦИЯ ДЛЯ РАЗМЫШЛЕНИЯ
17. Asia-Plus
18. TV YORMATOV
19. Пайки Сугд
20. Телевизиони Тоҷикистон
21. dfilm.tj



### Social media pages and networks

1. Nigohi nav/Новый взгляд
2. #Насилию Net.
3. Tajik Mama Group
4. Ифформация для размышления
5. Обзор Вести Согда
6. Мы Таджикистанцы
7. Женсовет Tj
8. Азия плюс
9. Youth of Sughd/Молодёжь Согда
10. Я люблю Худжанд/ I Love Khujand
11. Центральная Азия: Политика, Общество, Религия
1. Раҷаб Мирзо
2. Хилватшоҳ Маҳмуд (Хоҷаев)
3. Сайидмуҳиддин Дӯстмуҳаммадиён
4. Сайф Достиев (Мизроб)
5. Раҳматилло Зойиров
6. Салими Аюбзод
7. Мирзо Салимпур
8. Мавҷуда Сохибназарова
9. Саиджафар Усмонзода
10. Икбол Тешаев
11. Негматулло Мирсаидов
12. Зебо Таджибаева
13. Зульфия Голубева
14. Лилия Гайсина
15. Гульнора Амиршоева
16. Раҷаб Мирзо
17. Рустам Гулов
18. Manzura Mahkamova
19. Чони Сафарзода
20. Аъзам Акбаров
21. Негматулло Мирсаидов



### Leaders of public opinion