

16 September 2021

KAZAKHSTAN: "It is not allowed to pray at any location unless it's approved"

By Felix Corley, Forum 18 (<https://www.forum18.org>)

Courts and police have fined at least 15 people (one twice) and 3 organisations so far in 2021 for holding meetings for worship, hosting such meeting, maintaining places for such meetings, or holding other religious rituals without state permission. The fines were of between three weeks' and four months' average wage for those in formal work. After a Muslim was fined for leading Friday prayers, a police officer told Forum 18: "It is not allowed to pray at any location unless it's approved." Challenged about open surveillance of Baptists meeting for worship, an official claimed: "This isn't spying, this is monitoring," adding "we go to mosques, churches."

Courts and police across Kazakhstan have fined at least 15 people (one twice) and three organisations so far in 2021 for holding meetings for worship, hosting such meetings, or maintaining places for such meetings, or holding other religious rituals without state permission. The fines were of between three weeks' and four months' average wage for those in formal work. In another case, the court closed the case because the alleged "offence" had occurred one year earlier, beyond the time limit for bringing an administrative prosecution.

Of the 19 cases that ended with punishment, courts also handed 14 people and organisations three-month bans on maintaining a place for holding meetings for worship, or a vaguer three-month ban on unspecified activity. A March court decision in Aktau also ordered that 12 Islamic books and 10 calendars seized from an individual be confiscated (see below).

For a full list of the 20 known administrative cases between January and August 2021 for holding meetings for worship, hosting such meetings or maintaining places for such meetings without state permission, see below.

The regime is preparing several sets of legal amendments that may affect the way the state's tight restrictions on who can hold meetings for worship, religious rituals or study - and where - are imposed and what will be subject to punishment. Secrecy surrounds the current status of the amendments. Officials of the lower house of Parliament, the Mazhilis, told Forum 18 that they have not yet arrived there (see below).

The 20 known administrative cases between January and August 2021 to punish people and organisations for holding meetings for worship, hosting such meetings or maintaining places for such meetings without state permission were among 90 known administrative cases to punish the exercise of freedom of religion or belief. The other known cases were:

- Punishing offering religious literature, icons or other items for sale without state permission – 15 cases (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2683);

- Punishing offering religious items for sale online without state permission – 13 cases (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2683);

- Punishing offering free religious materials without state permission – 2 cases;

- Punishing posting religious materials online without state permission – 22 cases;

- Punishing sharing faith without state permission - 2 cases;

- Punishing violating mosques' internal rules – 8 cases;

- Punishing religious teaching without state permission – 7 cases;

- Punishing trying to import religious literature without state permission - 1 case.

After a Muslim was fined for leading Friday prayers, a police officer told Forum 18: "It is not allowed to pray at any location unless it's approved." A Baptist Church in Oral which does not seek state permission to meet was fined after a police raid. Officials regularly visit it during meetings for worship, an official telling Forum 18: "We go to mosques, churches." One Baptist told Forum 18: "They send an official who sits at the back and conducts what they call 'monitoring' of what we are doing." He added that "she doesn't intervene, but counts how many people are there, watches who is there and records with a device" (see below).

Church members have told the official not to film or record the meeting for worship. "Let her come and hear the word of God," the Baptist continued. "We don't allow her to record, but she still does it." "This isn't spying, this is monitoring, nothing more," Azat Karatai of West Kazakhstan Region Religious Affairs Department claimed to Forum 18 (see below).

Among those punished for religious teaching without state permission was a Muslim, Kelir Nusyroov. On 12 July, Kordai District Court in Zhambyl Region fined him 100 Monthly Financial Indicators (MFIs), about 7 weeks' average local wage, for teaching Islam and the Koran to local children in his home. He is the third Muslim from the Dungan ethnic minority (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2652) known to have been fined for religious teaching so far in 2021 and the eleventh since August 2018.

Frequent punishments

Courts have repeatedly heard administrative cases in recent years to punish people and organisations for holding meetings for worship, hosting such meetings or maintaining places for such meetings without state permission. In the whole of 2020, courts prosecuted 19 individuals (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2634) for meetings for worship without state permission (37 in 2019, 40 in 2018, 88 in 2017).

In a case in April 2020, a private school in Almaty was fined for maintaining a prayer room without state permission. The court also banned the school from operating for three months (see below).

On 6 September, a group of 1,640 parents from Nur-Sultan, Almaty, and other cities lodged a petition to President Kasym-Zhomart Tokayev on the government's petitions website, calling for prayer rooms to be allowed in schools. They note that within the Palais des Nations where the United Nations' Office in Geneva is located – which they point out that as a former Foreign Minister and former Director-General of the UN Office Tokayev would be familiar with – there are two prayer rooms (https://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/108/practical-information/WCMS_685684/lang--en/index.htm). They describe this as "nothing out of the ordinary", and call for Kazakhstan's Religion Law to be amended to allow this in Kazakhstan.

Fined for holding, hosting or maintaining places for worship

Of the 20 known administrative cases against people and organisations between January and August 2021 for holding meetings for worship, hosting such meetings or maintaining places for such meetings without state permission, 19 ended with punishment. Each of the fines was of between 35 Monthly Financial Indicators (MFIs), about three weeks' average wage for those in work, and 200 MFIs (four months' average wage).

Of the 19 cases that ended with punishment, 14 ended not only with fines but also three-month bans on maintaining a place for holding meetings for worship, or a vaguer three-month ban on activity. In one case – that of Aktau-based Muslim Erbolat Dzhuguniov – the court ordered religious literature seized from him to be confiscated by the state (see below). The court decision, seen by Forum 18, does not say what officials will do with the confiscated books and calendars.

"Not allowed to pray at any location unless it's approved"

Twice in 2021, Aktobe Specialised Administrative Court fined local Muslim Mukhammed Toleu – who is now 57 - for holding prayers in his own property.

On 18 December 2020, officials found Toleu leading Friday prayers in the basement of his home. Officials launched cases against him on 20 and 21 December 2020 for both violating the religion law and conducting unapproved business in relation to people who rented space in his house. Police Captain D. Akhmetov and Inspector Sabr Yeshniyazov led the cases against Toleu.

On 28 January 2021, Aktobe Specialised Administrative Court, handed Toleu a combined 65 MFI fine (about six weeks' average wage for those in formal work) on the two charges, plus a 3-month ban on maintaining a prayer room.

Officials again brought a case against Toleu for holding Friday prayers on 12 February. He told the court that "he did not gather people for a special Friday prayer at his house, that day his relatives and acquaintances came to his house to drink tea, and when it was time for prayer, everyone prayed", according to the court decision seen by Forum 18.

On 25 March, Aktobe Specialised Administrative Court fined him 200 MFIs, about four months' average wages, as this was a second "offence" within a year of a previous conviction. Aktobe Regional Court rejected his appeal on 12 April.

Alimbek Turaliyev, Head of Aktobe Region's Religious Affairs Department, declined to comment on the prosecution of Toleu. "It's not we that launched the administrative case – the police did," he told Forum 18 from Aktobe on 15 September. He refused to say how many administrative cases his Department had launched in 2021 and put the phone down.

An officer at Aktobe police told Forum 18 on 15 September that Inspector Yeshniyazov had been fired earlier in the year. He declined to put Forum 18 through to Captain Akhmedov.

Asked why cases had been brought against Toleu, the officer responded: "It is not allowed to pray at any location unless it's approved."

"They waited until the end of the service"

On 8 January, Police and officials of West Kazakhstan Region Religious Affairs Department raided the Christmas service of a Baptist congregation in Oral (Uralsk). The congregation – like all Council of Churches Baptist congregations – chooses not to seek state registration.

"They waited until the end of the service, then took several church members to the police station," congregation member Nikolai Novikov told Forum 18 from Oral on 15 September. "There they issued summary fines to Dmitry Isayev and Vladimir Nelepin." Police fined each one month's average wage for those in formal work.

"We don't consider we have done anything wrong, so we don't pay such fines," Novikov added. "They took the money for the fine from Isayev's wages." He said the authorities can demand that employers hand over up to half a person's wage to pay off such fines. "Businesses can't refuse such demands."

Azat Karatai of West Kazakhstan Region Religious Affairs Department said his officials and the police visited the Baptist congregation during their meeting for worship "because they're not registered and they act not in accordance with the law", he told Forum 18 from Oral on 16 September. "We're just fulfilling our job. They must have registration."

Asked why the Baptists cannot meet for worship without state permission in line with Kazakhstan's international human rights commitments, Karatai responded: "If you have questions you should ring our government and ask why." He refused to say how many administrative cases his Department had launched in 2021 to punish the exercise of freedom of religion or belief.

"This isn't spying, this is monitoring, nothing more"?

Officials regularly visit the Baptist congregation in Oral during meetings for worship. "They send an official who sits at the back and conducts what they call 'monitoring' of what we are doing," Novikov told Forum 18. "She doesn't intervene, but counts how many people are there, watches who is there and records with a device." Church members have told her not to film or record the meeting for worship.

Novikov said that the official sent to "monitor" their meetings for worship often changed, but for the last half year the same woman had been sent. The church does not know whether she works for the city or regional Akimat (Administration) or what her role is there. At present she comes to meeting for worships about once a month.

"Let her come and hear the word of God," Novikov told Forum 18. "We don't allow her to record, but she still does it."

"This isn't spying, this is monitoring, nothing more," Azat Karatai of West Kazakhstan Region Religious Affairs Department claimed to Forum 18 from Oral. "Our official doesn't fine anyone. We go to mosques, churches." He refused to identify the woman who has been visiting the Baptist congregation once a month for the last six months.

Karatai stressed that the Baptist congregation functions without registration. "If they won't abide by the demands of the law, it is our job to follow their activity." However, he denied that the official records the services. "No-one makes hidden recordings," he insisted. "All is open."

A Protestant pastor from elsewhere in Kazakhstan notes that visits by individuals they suspect might be officials monitoring their activity used to be more common, but now tend to be rarer. "Unknown people sometimes attend services," the pastor told Forum 18. "We don't know who they are or why they come."

"Maybe it sounds absurd to you"

Individuals are also punished for holding what state officials regard as religious rituals without state permission outdoors.

On 29 March, Hare Krishna devotee Timur Seitov was conducting religious chants at a crossroads in central Almaty. As the

subsequent court decision (seen by Forum 18) notes, he "conducted religious rituals by repeating the mantra 'Hare Krishna', by this violating the demands of the law for conducting religious rites and ceremonies". A witness said he sang there with an instrument and amplifier for two hours each evening, drawing people to listen. The witness reported this to the Religious Affairs Department "because she thought Seitov was a member of a sect".

On 8 April, after studying photos and video footage of Seitov's activity, officials of Almaty's Religious Affairs Department concluded that he had been conducting religious rituals without state permission. On 4 May, Almas Dzhanametov, a religious affairs official from Almaty's Medeu District Akimat (Administration), drew up a record of an offence against Seitov.

On 27 May, Almaty Inter-District Specialised Administrative Court found Seitov guilty, fined him one month's average wage and banned him from unspecified activity for three months. Seitov told the court he chants mantras on the street every day and denied committing any offence. Almaty City Court rejected his appeal on 16 July, according to the court decision seen by Forum 18.

"Maybe it sounds absurd to you, but Seitov conducted religious rituals – singing mantras," Bakdaulet Abdikhamitov of Almaty's Religious Affairs Department told Forum 18 from Almaty on 16 September. "We have a law that places restrictions on conducting religious rituals."

Officials had repeatedly warned Seitov not to conduct such religious rituals, Abdikhamitov added, "but unfortunately he ignored them. We also got complaints." Asked whether officials took action against other events on the street, such as marches commemorating the Second World War, Abdikhamitov responded: "This is different. We are talking about religious rituals." He then put the phone down.

Why state restrictions on meetings for worship?

The regime imposes tight restrictions on where people can meet for worship and conduct religious rituals (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2409).

Religious communities that have been refused state registration (like Ahmadi Muslims or mosques independent of the state-controlled Muslim Board (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2409)) or choose not to apply for state registration (like Council of Churches Baptists) are not allowed to exercise freedom of religion or belief. If they hold any meetings for worship or other religious purposes they risk punishment.

Under Article 7, Part 2 of the Religion Law, freedom of religion and belief may only be exercised by registered religious communities "in religious buildings and their assigned territory, in places of worship, offices and premises of religious associations, in cemeteries and in crematoriums, and inside homes and dining halls if needed on condition that they respect the rights and interests of nearby residents". Any new place of worship requires the approval of the local administration.

In 2016, at the end of its consideration of Kazakhstan's record under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR/C/KAZ/CO/2 (https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CCPR/C/KAZ/CO/2&Lang=En)), the United Nations Human Rights Committee expressed concern about "undue restrictions on the exercise of freedom of religious belief", including "the mandatory registration of religious organizations, the ban on unregistered religious activities". The Committee added: "The State party should guarantee the effective exercise of freedom of religion and belief and freedom to manifest a religion or belief in practice."

The Committee called on Kazakhstan to "revise all relevant laws and practices with a view to removing all restrictions that go beyond the narrowly construed restrictions permitted under article 18 of the Covenant [ICCPR]".

Will legal changes increase, decrease or leave unchanged restrictions on holding meetings for worship?

The regime is preparing several sets of legal amendments (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2680) that may affect the way the state's religious censorship is imposed and what will be subject to punishment.

The Information and Social Development Ministry proposed a new Law on Social Control (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2680) which would amend a range of other laws, including the Religion Law. The draft Law was published for public consultation on the government's draft Law website on 15 January. Forum 18 has seen the text of the draft Religion Law amendments from late July.

The draft amendments (in their July version) would make holding religious meetings away from state-registered places of worship more difficult. Under a new Article 7-1, any religious community which does not own its own building, as well as communities that want to hold a pilgrimage or other event away from their own place of worship, would be subject to the new bureaucratic procedures, were these amendments to be sent to Parliament and adopted.

Protestant, Jehovah's Witness and Hare Krishna communities are among many that do not own their own buildings and would therefore be likely to be subject to these new bureaucratic demands.

The Religion Law changes would require registered religious communities to seek permission for such meetings from local administrations at least ten days in advance and provide exhaustive detail about the proposed event (including the date, start and end time, how people will get there, fire and medical precautions envisaged, and how many people will travel in each vehicle), according to the July version of the draft amendments.

Local officials are given many ways to refuse such requests. They have five working days from receiving the application to request extra information if they believe the planned activity or information supplied is not in accordance with procedures. The registered religious community would have two working days to submit a revised application. If the community fails to lodge the revised application on time or fails to remove any inconsistencies in the application (in the view of the local administration), officials can withhold permission up to two calendar days before the religious event was due to take place.

"Communities would have arranged transport and amplifying equipment, and advertised the event, and then at the last minute receive news that the local authority had banned it, when it would be too late to get their money back," one religious leader told Forum 18 in August.

The draft amendments describe seeking permission for such religious meetings from local administrations as "notification". But given that officials must give permission before such meetings are allowed this represents a request for permission, one human rights defender told Forum 18 in August.

However, several sources told Forum 18 that on 29 June the Prime Minister's Office sent the draft Law for revision, apparently ordering that the provisions amending the Religion Law be removed.

The Information and Social Development Ministry also prepared separate amendments to the Religion Law (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2680). These have not been made public. Forum 18 has seen a draft text from late July.

The amendments in the July draft to Religion Law would leave unchanged the restrictions on holding or hosting meetings for worship or for conducting religious rituals, or maintaining places for worship.

The Information and Social Development Ministry also prepared amendments to Article 490 of the Administrative Code (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2680), which punishes "Violating the Religion Law". Forum 18 has seen a draft text from late July.

Under the July draft, punishments would be reduced for individuals exercising freedom of religion or belief, including by "conducting rites, ceremonies and meetings" without state permission. Currently individuals face fines of 50 Monthly Financial Indicators, about 1 month's average wage for those in formal work. This would be halved to 25 MFIs, with the new possibility of an official warning instead.

Punishments would be reduced for individuals "building places of worship (facilities), or changing the usage (altering the functional designation) of buildings (facilities) into ritual buildings (facilities)" without state permission. Currently individuals face fines of 50 MFIs and organisations 200 MFIs. These would be halved, to 25 MFIs for individuals and 100 MFIs for organisations. The three-month ban on activity would remain unchanged.

However, it remains unclear how far these three proposed sets of amendments have got. Yerzhan Nukezhanov, Head of the Religious Affairs Committee, spoke about the proposed Religion Law amendments at a 7 September government briefing, but did not specify which specific amendments he was talking about or give a timescale for adoption.

An official who answered the phone of the Religious Affairs Committee Legal Department on 14 September told Forum 18 that neither its Head, Beimbet Manetov, nor chief expert Mirgul Kalabayeva was in the office. The official said no one else could give any information about the proposed amendments. Telephones went unanswered on 15 and 16 September.

An official of the Social and Cultural Development Committee of the lower house of Parliament, the Mazhilis, told Forum 18 on 15 September that it is awaiting the text of the new Law on Social Control from the government. The official could not say when the draft text is likely to reach the Mazhilis and when the Committee will begin considering it.

The Social and Cultural Development Committee official had no information about any separate proposed amendments to the Religion Law or to the Administrative Code.

Punishing meetings, rituals held without state permission

Administrative Code Article 463, Part 1 punishes "Engaging in entrepreneurial or other activity, as well as carrying out actions without appropriate registration, permission or sending notification in cases where registration, permission or sending notification is compulsory, if such actions do not contain elements a criminally liable behaviour" with a fine on individuals of 15 MFIs, with possible seizure of property.

Administrative Code Article 489 (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2409), Part 9 punishes "Leadership of an unregistered, halted, or banned religious community or social organisation" with a fine of 100 MFIs.

Administrative Code Article 489, Part 10 punishes "Participation in an unregistered, halted, or banned religious community or social organisation" with a fine of 50 MFIs.

Administrative Code Article 490 (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2409), Part 1, Point 1 punishes "violation of procedures established in law for conducting rites, ceremonies and meetings". Punishment for individuals is a fine of 50 MFIs, and for organisations a fine of 200 MFIs and a 3-month ban on activity.

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 3 punishes: "Violating the requirements of the Religion Law for .. import, manufacturing, production, publication and/or distribution of religious literature and other religious materials, and items for religious use". The punishment for individuals is a fine of 50 MFIs.

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 4 punishes: "Violating the requirements of the Religion Law for .. construction of religious buildings, and changing the profile (functional purpose) of a building into a religious building". The punishment for individuals is a fine of 50 MFIs.

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 3 punishes: "Carrying out missionary activity without state registration (or re-registration), as well as the use by missionaries of religious literature, information materials with religious content or religious items without a positive assessment from a religious studies expert analysis (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2409), and spreading the teachings of a religious group which is not registered in Kazakhstan". The punishment is a fine of 100 MFIs, with deportation if the individual is a foreign citizen.

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 8 punishes a further "offence" within one year of an administrative conviction for violating the Religion Law.

2021 prosecutions for holding meetings, rituals, having rooms, without state permission

Known administrative cases in 2021 to 16 September: 20

Known convictions in 2021 to 16 September: 19

Punishments:

10 fines of 50 MFIs (1 month's average wage);

4 fines of 200 MFIs (4 months' average wages)

4 fines of 35 MFIs (3 weeks' average wages);

1 fine of 65 MFIs (6 weeks' average wages);

14 3-month bans on maintaining a place for holding meetings for worship, or a vaguer three-month ban on unspecified activity;

and 1 religious literature seizure.

The list below gives the date of initial decision by a lower court or the police, name of defendant, belief if known, court or police issuing decision, Administrative Code article, reason for prosecution, and outcome.

1) 8 January 2021

Dmitry Isayev, Council of Churches Baptist

Oral Police

Administrative Code Article 489, without state permission holding a meeting for worship (raided by police)

50 MFI fine

2) 8 January 2021

Vladimir Nelepin, Council of Churches Baptist

Oral Police

Administrative Code Article 489, without state permission holding a meeting for worship (raided by police)

50 MFI fine

3) 28 January 2021

Mukhammed Toleu, Muslim

Aktobe Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 1, and Article 463, Part 1, without state permission maintaining prayer room

65 MFI fine plus 3-month ban on prayer room, though no such prayer rooms are legal

(Toleu was later fined 200 MFIs for a second "offence" – see 9, 25 March below)

4) 25 February 2021

Otyrar, charity

Nur-Sultan Inter-District Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 1, without state permission maintaining prayer room

(Charity denied maintaining prayer room and said agreed visits from state-controlled Muslim Board (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2409) imams had ended.)

200 MFI fine plus 3-month ban on prayer room, though no such prayer rooms are legal

5) 1 March 2021

Dias Gabibullauly, Muslim

Shymkent Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 1, without state permission maintaining prayer room in fitness club

50 MFI fine plus 3-month ban on unspecified activity

6) 17 March 2021

Khakimzhan Valishov, Muslim

Aktau Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 1, without state permission maintaining prayer room

35 MFI fine plus 3-month ban on unspecified activity

7) 17 March 2021

Erbolat Dzhuguniov, Muslim

Aktau Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 1, without state permission praying and reading religious literature with Odilzhan Ermetov (see 8, 18 March below)

50 MFI fine plus confiscation of 12 books and 10 calendars

8) 18 March 2021

Odilzhan Ermetov, Muslim

Aktau Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 1, without state permission praying and reading religious literature with Erbolat Dzhuguniyov (see 7, 17 March above)

50 MFI fine plus 3-month ban on unspecified activity

9) 25 March 2021

Mukhammed Toleu, Muslim

Aktobe Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 8, for the second time (see 3, 28 January above) maintaining prayer room

200 MFI fine

10) 6 April 2021

Nesipkul Uteshova, unknown faith

Turkistan City Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 4, without state permission turning house into place of worship

50 MFI fine plus 3-month ban on place of worship, though no place of worship without state permission to exist is legal

11) 16 April 2021

Ai-Saf private school

Almaty Inter-District Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 1, without state permission maintaining prayer room

200 MFI fine plus 3-month ban on the school's activity

12) 20 April 2021

Daniyarbek Dzhumabayev, Muslim

Shymkent Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 1, without state permission maintaining prayer room in cafe

50 MFI fine plus 3-month ban on prayer room, though no such prayer rooms are legal

13) 20 April 2021

Akingaly Erkebai, Muslim

Shalkar District Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 1, without state permission organising and leading Friday prayers in no longer

registered mosque which he owns

50 MFI fine plus 3-month ban on conducting religious rituals

14) 28 April 2021

Dzhamal Bursalov, Muslim

Almaty Inter-District Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 1, without state permission maintaining prayer room in business centre

35 MFI fine plus 3-month ban on unspecified activity

15) 14 May 2021

Aman Zhakselekov, Muslim

Nur-Sultan Inter-District Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 1, without state permission maintaining prayer room (identified by police "Struggle with Extremism Department")

35 MFI fine plus 3-month ban on unspecified activity

16) 27 May 2021

Timur Seitov, Hare Krishna

Almaty Inter-District Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 1, without state permission chanting Hare Krishna mantras on the street

50 MFI fine plus 3-month ban on unspecified activity

17) 9 June 2021

Estiyar Pirmakhanbetov, Muslim

Almaty Inter-District Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 1, without state permission maintaining prayer room in business centre

35 MFI fine plus 3-month ban on unspecified activity

18) 18 June 2021

Nurbol Omirzakov, unknown belief

Almaty Inter-District Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 1, without state permission holding religious meetings in home in June 2020

Case closed as deadline for lodging cases had passed

19) 12 August 2021

Danesh Piltan, Muslim

Taldykorgan Inter-District Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 1, without state permission conducting Muslim marriage ceremony

(Piltan is not an imam of the state-controlled Muslim Board (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2409) and the only "offence" being prosecuted was holding a ceremony without state permission.)

50 MFI fine

20) 16 August 2021

Birlik, charity

Atbasar Town Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 1, without state permission holding prayers in charity office

200 MFI fine plus 3-month ban on unspecified activity

(END)

Full reports on freedom of thought, conscience and belief in Kazakhstan
(<https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?query=&religion=all&country=29>)

For more background, see Forum 18's Kazakhstan religious freedom survey (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2409)

Forum 18's compilation of Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) freedom of religion or belief commitments
(https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=1351)

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