



KAZAKH DIASPORA IN IRAN AND THE NURLY KOSH PROGRAM

The Kazakh diasporas in the world were formed as a result of many historical events. Throughout the history of Kazakhstan, Kazakhs left their homeland for other countries only in exceptional circumstances – as a result of political, economic, and religious oppression, rebellions and wars, genocide and famine, particularly, in the early Soviet period; therefore, this type of migration was often forced and violent. Kazakhs moved to neighboring countries, and some of them found their shelter in countries of Europe and even across the ocean in the Americas, while others found themselves living abroad as a result of new borders. At the present time, the migration of Kazakhs has an individual character, since they change their place of residence in search of a better life, due to a job change or in order to reunite with family members living abroad. Kazakhs, who live outside of Kazakhstan, are an integral part of the entire Kazakh nation and have one homeland – Kazakhstan, observe Kazakh customs and traditions and belong to the same ethnic group.

According to the official statistics, the current population of the country is 18.7 million people, of which 68%, or 12.7 million, are ethnic Kazakhs. Ethnic Kazakhs also live in China, Uzbekistan, Russia, the European Union, and the USA. The largest Kazakh diaspora is the Chinese one with more than 2 million people. In Uzbekistan, the number of Kazakhs amounts to 760,000, in Russia – 661,000, in Turkey – 8,500, in Iran – 6,300, etc. Overall, according to the World Association of Kazakhs, there are more than five million Kazakhs living outside of Kazakhstan in 43 countries.

The Kazakh diasporas have their own unique historical feature. As a nomadic people, who moved from one pasture to another during four seasons of the year, the Kazakhs successfully and easily adapt to a new country, even though they constitute an ethnic minority in the host country. One such country is Iran, where about 6,000 Kazakhs live. Kazakhs of what is now known as the Mangistau region, which is located east of the Caspian Sea, emigrated to Iran after the October Revolution of 1917 and the famine of 1932-1933 in the Kazakh steppe. The October Revolution and the establishment of Soviet power were a deep wound for many peoples living on the territory of the former Russian empire. Until 1917, Kazakhstan was considered as a country of nomads with

a traditional way of life, and during the period of technological progress, the country of nomads did not have positive perspectives to become an economically developed country. For this reason, the people, who came to power at that time, forcibly and radically changed the established way of life of the Kazakhs in an attempt to make a qualitative breakthrough from nomadism into industrialized society. Along with such positive consequences, which also included the elimination of illiteracy, there were many negative moments, including the repressions against the national elite and broken fates of many Kazakh people, who were forced to seek refuge, particularly, after the famine of the 1930s. The Soviet policy of liquidation of the Kulaks (small landowners), collectivization, increase in the food procurement plan, and the confiscation of private cattle was especially cruel for the regions of the USSR, which traditionally supplied food products. Kazakhstan, which population mainly consisted of nomadic cattle breeders, was one of the most affected republics of the Soviet Union. The famine began in the winter of 1930 and hard-hit the nomadic Kazakhs of the north and southeast of the country. To feed themselves, the nomads began slaughtering their livestock and fleeing Soviet Kazakhstan, and at the peak of the famine from 1931 to 1933, more than 1.1 million people, most of whom were Kazakhs, left Kazakhstan and migrated to neighboring Soviet republics, China and further abroad. Thus, the situation and politics in the country during the Soviet period led to a massive migration of people from Kazakhstan, some of whom went to Iran.

Kazakhs, who settled in the Iranian province of Golestan, have been living there for five generations. They are called Iranian Kazakhs; the Kazakh diaspora in Iran is considered quite young. Iranian Kazakhs predominantly inhabit the counties of Gorgan, Conbad-e Qabus, Bandar-e Gaz, and Tor-kaman. Over time, Kazakhs began to live in large cities of Iran such as Tehran and Mashhad. They observe Kazakh customs and traditions and do not mix with other ethnic minorities, who live in Iran, in marriage. Being educated in Persian, Iranian Kazakhs have successfully adapted in Iran. Despite the small number of the Kazakh diaspora in Iran, the authorities of Kazakhstan are interested in the repatriation of Kazakhs from Iran.

On December 2, 2008, the government of Kazakhstan issued decree No. 1126, creating a program called “Nurly Kosh” (Blessed or Bright Migration) for the repatriation of Kazakhs from abroad. The reasons why the Kazakh government is interested in the return of ethnic Kazakhs are the aging of the population, the emigration of highly qualified specialists to the countries of near and far abroad, the presence of large unpopulated territories and the targeted policy to increase the population. Therefore, the return of ethnic Kazakhs to their homeland contributes not only to the implementation of Kazakhstan’s demographic policy, but also to the country’s political and economic sustainability. During the years of his rule, Nursultan Nazarbayev, the first president of Kazakhstan, clearly outlined the strategy and tasks for state bodies to develop a program for the return of Kazakhs. Consequently, the Nurly Kosh program was developed, which allocates quotas for Kazakhs living abroad and helps them to get settled on the territory of Kazakhstan. Moreover, the government of Kazakhstan provides social support to resettled Kazakhs by providing allowances for the purchase of housing and reimbursement of relocation costs. According to this program, Iranian Kazakhs have the opportunity to return to Kazakhstan, and the number of Kazakhs living in Iran is decreasing due to the repatriation. Under this program, many Iranian Kazakhs left Iran and moved to the city of Aktau, Mangistau region. Thus, owing to the state’s active policy of social and financial support of ethnic Kazakhs, Iranian Kazakhs gained an opportunity to return to their ancestral homeland.

In summary, the main historical feature that unites many Kazakh diasporas living outside of Kazakhstan is the forced and violent escape of their elder generations from their homeland due to tragic political and economic events. Mass flows of people fleeing Kazakhstan contributed to the creation of the Kazakh diasporas in neighboring states, Europe, and the Americas. A small but significant part of the Kazakh people is the Kazakh diaspora in Iran. More than 6,000 Iranian Kazakhs have adapted in the host country not leaving behind Kazakh traditions, customs, and language. By the virtue of the Kazakhstan government’s support and interest in the repatriation of ethnic Kazakhs, there is a great hope that the freedom-loving hearts of nomads will finish their wanderings abroad and return to their homeland.

Politics, Foreign Affairs, and Security

- Turkey's interagency delegation held consultations with Russian counterparts in Moscow to discuss regional developments, in particular Libya and Syria. On Libya, the parties confirmed an importance of initiating an inclusive political dialogue process among Libyans under the UN auspices in order to reach a sustainable and lasting political solution. On Syria, discussions were held on situation on the ground in the Idlib de-escalation area and issues regarding the conduct of joint patrols (MFA of Turkey, 01.09.2020).
- President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev delivered his address to the nation titled "Kazakhstan in a New Reality: Time for Action", in which he presented a strategy for the country's further development. President Tokayev came up with a number of initiatives aimed at increasing the efficiency of the governance system and the economy, unlocking industrial potential, developing agriculture, transport and logistics, small and medium-sized businesses, and the financial sector, as well as increasing the social well-being of the population (Akorda, 02.09.2020).
- Representatives of government bodies, academia and civil society participated in an online discussion on access to information in Kazakhstan, jointly organized by the OSCE and the Legal Media Center public foundation. Participants discussed the relevant national legislation, different categories of information classification, protection of the right of access to information and transparency, accountability issues, procedures governing the release of official information, and participation of civil society in the legislative process (OSCE, 03.09.2020).
- Ministers of foreign affairs of Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan Chingiz Aidarbekov and Rashid Meredov held talks via videoconferencing. The parties exchanged views concerning preparations to the third consultative meeting of the heads of the Central Asian states to be held in Bishkek. The ministers also discussed the agenda of bilateral relations and paid special attention to the issues related to the global COVID-19 pandemic (MFA of Turkmenistan, 02.09.2020).
- Ministers of foreign affairs of Russia and Belarus Sergey Lavrov and Vladimir Makei held negotiations in Moscow to discuss the internal political situation in Belarus after the presidential election. In particular, the parties stressed the inadmissibility of attempts to interfere in internal affairs of Belarus. The Russian side reaffirmed its readiness to help normalize the situation and expressed support for the constitutional reform initiative of the Belarusian authorities (MFA of Russia, 02.09.2020).
- A meeting of defense ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Commonwealth of Independent States and Collective Security Treaty Organization member countries took place in the Moscow region. The parties adopted a joint statement on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. They also agreed to expand cooperation in the fight against terrorism and discussed possible measures to build a response capacity to biological threats (CIS Executive Committee, 04.09.2020).

Economy, Finance, and Energy

- The U.S. Chamber of Commerce announced the launch of the U.S.-Kazakhstan Business Council with the goal of advancing economic and commercial cooperation between the two countries. Currently, annual bilateral trade stands at approximately \$2 billion, and the potential for growth is high in sectors such as agriculture, energy, mining, and infrastructure. More than 700 U.S. companies operate in Kazakhstan, and Chevron as the largest investor was named the corporate chair of the council (U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 01.09.2020).
- Uzbekistan's Ministry of Agriculture and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization held an online ceremony of signing agreements on new regional projects. This partnership is aimed at increasing the sustainability and efficiency of agriculture and improving the living standards of the rural population. In particular, the projects to be financed by South Korea and Japan provide for the introduction of innovative technologies in the greenhouse industry and strengthening pest control at the national and regional levels (UzDaily, 04.09.2020).
- Deputy Prime Ministers of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan Erkin Asrandiev and Sardor Umurzakov held online talks to outline specific goals of economic cooperation and discuss plans for expanding mutual investment, trade, transport and logistics partnership. The parties also exchanged views on further measures to deepen industrial cooperation and agreed to adopt a relevant roadmap. Over the past three years, trade between the two countries increased almost five times, amounting to \$818.4 million in 2019 (UzDaily, 04.09.2020).
- According to Tajikistan's Ministry of Finance, the country plans to attract external loans totaling \$1 billion under the national program of state external borrowings until 2022. Tajikistan will borrow \$220 million in 2020, \$336.4 million in 2021 and more than \$365 million in 2022. As of July 1, 2020, the country's external debt amounted to \$3 billion 96.1 million, or 36.1% of GDP, with the government spending about \$115 million on servicing external debt in the first half of 2020 (New Europe, 03.09.2020).
- Belarus significantly improved its position in the 2020 Global Innovation Index, moving up from 86th in 2018 and 72nd in 2019 to 64th in 2020 in the ranking of 131 countries. According to the State Science and Technology Committee of Belarus, this positive change came as the result of the development of the innovation economy's infrastructure, the better business and institutional environment, and the higher quality of education (BelTA, 03.09.2020).
- The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development will provide a €10 million loan to Ukraine's Agrofusion Group, which is the third largest tomato paste producer in Europe. It exports over 72% of its production to 45 countries around the world. The company will use the loan to cope with negative consequences of the coronavirus pandemic such as delays in client payments and higher operating costs, as well as to implement its long-term strategy to become the first fully organic tomato paste producer in Ukraine (Ukrinform, 04.09.2020).

Society and Culture

- The youth portal Massaget.kz posted the fourth chapter of the video of the epic novel "Abai Zholy" (Path of Abai) by prominent Kazakh writer Mukhtar Auezov. The video is a summary of the novel made in the popular genre of doodle animation. The project is implemented as part of celebrations of the 175th anniversary of Abai with the support of the Ministry of Information and Social Development of Kazakhstan (Kazinform, 31.08.2020).
- TURKSOY presented a book on its cultural cooperation with Uzbekistan during an online conference attended by high-ranking Uzbek and Turkish officials and diplomats. According to TURKSOY Secretary General Dusen Kasseinov, in the near future, the organization will publish works of well-known Uzbek writers and poets and hold commemorative events dedicated to them. The participants also discussed activities related to the declaration of the ancient Uzbek city of Khiva as the 2020 Cultural Capital of the Turkic World (TURKSOY, 04.09.2020).
- The First Turkologist Student Congress was held with the support of the International Turkic Academy. The online event brought together well-known scholars of the Turkic world and students majoring in Turkology from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey and Uzbekistan. The participants made presentations and exchanged views on the study of folklore, literature, linguistics and traditions of the Turkic peoples (TWESCO, 04.09.2020).
- The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) organized the Fourth North and Central Asian Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The theme of the forum, held in a videoconference format, was "Human Well-being and the SDGs: Recovering after the COVID-19 crisis". The participants discussed possible actions and solutions to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the context of coping with the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (ESCAP, 02-04.09.2020).
- Leading Central Asian and Japanese healthcare professionals held a videoconference to discuss the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. The event was attended by representatives of relevant government agencies, medical institutions, universities, hospitals, and pharmaceutical companies. The participants exchanged information on the epidemiological situation in their countries, shared experience on the effective ways to treat the disease, and agreed to continue mutual practical contacts (UzA, 04.0.2020).
- Turkey provided Moldova with material assistance consisting of medical equipment and computers as a sign of friendship and strategic partnership between the two states. During the handover ceremony held at the Turkish embassy in Chisinau, the Moldovan side received 30,000 masks, 1,400 surgical aprons and 600 protective gowns. The aid will be distributed among the country's health institutions to ensure the protection of medical personnel in the fight against COVID-19 (Moldpres, 02.09.2020).