

CENTRAL ASIA

Field presence OHCHR Regional Office, based in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
Operation established in 2008

Countries of engagement

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. The Regional Office and Regional Representative are based in Bishkek, two staff members are in Dushanbe (a national programme officer and a human rights adviser to the UN Resident Coordinator) and one in Astana (a national officer). In addition, a human rights officer is based at the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia located in Ashgabat.

Engagement with the human rights mechanisms

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Wide variations in the economic, social, political and cultural contexts of Central Asia continue to impact the enjoyment of human rights across the region. Constitutions of the five countries reflect, to varying degrees, the majority of international human rights standards that guarantee human rights and foresee a separation of powers. There remain, however, challenges with implementing constitutional provisions in full compliance with their obligations under the ratified human rights treaties and the political commitments they have made within the context of the UPR.

In the biennium 2012-2013, several Central Asian countries demonstrated their willingness to engage with the human rights mechanisms, including noticeable efforts to comply with reporting requirements, extending invitations to the special procedures mandate-holders and receiving the visits of the High Commissioner and the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights in 2012 and 2013, respectively. Some countries in the region established a National Preventive Mechanism against torture in line with the OP-CAT, an interministerial Coordinating Council for Human Rights to follow-up on the recommendations issued by the human rights mechanisms and took steps to strengthen their Ombudsman Institutions. Continued efforts are needed to make those institutions effective.

The overall concerns in the region include: shortcomings in the rule of law; the prevalence of weak democratic institutions; corruption; the dominant role of the executive branch; organized crime; gaps between regions and different social groups in some of the countries and a focus on the



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A woman in a market in Kyrgyzstan.

fight against terrorism and extremism due to regional security concerns. Human rights issues of concern include: a prevalence of impunity, the alleged use of torture and restrictions on the exercise of freedoms of expression, association, peaceful assembly and religion which in turn affect the democratic space for civil society, human rights defenders, media and religious and sexual minorities.

Poverty combined with discrimination continues to affect numerous vulnerable groups and women, national minorities, elders, migrants and persons with disabilities. Mixed migration flows are rising and women and elders are being left behind to raise families. In addition, internal migration exacerbates existing competition over scarce employment, land and public services in cities.

Thematic priorities

- ▶ Strengthening the effectiveness of international human rights mechanisms with a focus on: ratifications; visits by special procedures; establishment of national participatory body for reporting and implementation of recommendations of human rights mechanisms and their integration in the work of the United Nations at the country level.
- ▶ Widening the democratic space with a focus on: "public freedoms" (freedom of expression, assembly and association; and incitement to hatred) and human rights defenders.
- ▶ Combating impunity and strengthening accountability and the rule of law with a focus on: human rights in the administration of justice; legislation, institutions and policies on torture, deprivation of liberty and legal and judicial protection of economic, social and cultural rights.

OHCHR expected contribution

ALL HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ALL IN CENTRAL ASIA	
RIGHTS-HOLDERS	DUTY-BEARERS
<p>[EA5] ▶ Strengthened and meaningful participation of rights-holders, particularly minorities, in selected processes, and particularly those related to housing, land and property rights in Kyrgyzstan.</p> <p>▶ Civil society, in particular youth and women's organizations, increasingly advocate for their rights in Tajikistan.</p>	<p>[EA1] ▶ National legislation and policies in the area of public freedoms improve compliance with international standards in Kazakhstan.</p> <p>▶ Legislative and policy frameworks increasingly preserve and guarantee democratic space in Kyrgyzstan.</p> <p>▶ Criminal justice legislative and policy frameworks, including in relation to past human rights violations, significantly improve their compliance with international human rights standards in Kyrgyzstan.</p> <p>▶ Human rights training institutionalized for judges and prosecutors in Kyrgyzstan.</p>
	<p>[EA2] ▶ Ratification of OP-CAT in Tajikistan.</p>
	<p>[EA3] ▶ National Preventive Mechanisms against torture as provided for under the OP-CAT are fully functioning in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.</p>
	<p>[EA6] ▶ Establishment and/or fully functioning participatory standing national coordinating bodies on reporting/ replying to individual communications and enquiries; and integrated follow-up to recommendations of all human rights mechanisms in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.</p> <p>▶ Recommendations from all human rights mechanisms related to, inter alia, the administration of justice and the right to adequate housing implemented in Kazakhstan.</p> <p>▶ Positive replies to request of special procedures mandate-holders to visit countries in the region.</p>

By 2017, OHCHR expects to have contributed to the achievement of the results outlined on the table above, in support of national efforts in the different thematic priority areas (colour scheme). OHCHR will pursue these behavioural, institutional and legislative changes in cooperation with relevant partners, using the different strategic tools at its disposal – monitoring and reporting, capacity-building and advisory services, advocacy and awareness-raising (see chapter one) – on the basis of an assessment of the specific context. It is expected that if achieved, these results will contribute to improving the duty-bearers' compliance with their international human rights obligations and to the rights-holders' ability to claim their rights and thereby to the enjoyment of all rights for all in the region.