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## **PROTESTERS IN KAZAKHSTAN DEMAND PRESIDENT SCRAP CHINA VISIT**

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Demonstrators in Kazakhstan's volatile southwestern town of Zhanaozen have demanded President Qasym-Zhomart Toqaev cancel his upcoming trip to China.

At least 100 protesters rallied in front of the mayor's office on September 2, challenging Kazakhstan's plan to build 55 industrial facilities in the country with China's financial assistance.

Toqaev is scheduled to pay an official two-day visit to Beijing starting on September 11. The demonstrators called on Toqaev to stop accepting loans from China.

Zhanaozen Deputy Mayor Amanghali Nurdauletov tried to speak with the protesters outside the mayor's office, but the demonstrators demanded the governor of the Manghystau region, Serikbai Turymov, meet with them.

The protesters left only after local officials promised that Turymov would come from the regional capital, Aqtau, to meet with them.

Zhanaozen is a restive oil-industry town where police in December 2011 fatally shot at least 16 people while dispersing protests by local oil workers.

Samat Sulei, a regional government spokesman, told RFE/RL that an official response to the protesters' demand will be issued later.

Anti-Chinese sentiment in Kazakhstan has been rising in recent months amid reports about the plight of indigenous ethnic groups, including Kazakhs, in China's northwestern region of Xinjiang.

The United Nations said last year that an estimated 1 million ethnic Uyghurs and other mostly Muslim Turkic-speaking indigenous people of Xinjiang were being held in what it described as "counterextremism centers" in the province.

The UN also said millions more had been forced into internment camps.

China says that the facilities are "vocational education centers" aimed at helping people steer clear of terrorism and allowing them to be reintegrated into society.

In recent months, several demonstrations protesting against reeducation camps for indigenous ethnic groups in Xinjiang have been held in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia's Republic of

Tatarstan.

<https://www.rferl.org/a/protesters-in-kazakhstan-demand-president-toqaev-scrap-upcoming-visit-to-china/30142678.html>

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