
KAZAKHSTAN ALLOWS SMALL PRO-DEMOCRACY RALLIES IN RARE STEP TOWARDS TOLERATING CRITICS

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Activists of the recently established "Oyan, Qazaqstan" (Wake up, Kazakhstan) pro-democracy movement, mostly made up of Kazakhs in their teens and 20s, held small-scale rallies in several Kazakh cities on August 30, after the government allowed limited public rallies called for pro-democracy youth activists.

Public protests, even since the demise of the Soviet Union three decades ago, have effectively been treated as illegal in the Central Asian nation [] Kazakh governments new approach appears to represent a softening of its attitude. The unofficial members of the "Oyan, Qazaqstan" group were among the many who took part in [presidential election day protests](#) in June, when around 4,000 people were arrested across the country. But the small protests on August 30 stood in contrast to those in June, as police stood on the sidelines and did not interfere with the non-violent demonstrations.

The youth activists demanded constitutional reforms and a switch to a parliamentary republic—some carried banners quoting the articles of the constitution.

The movement emerged after 79-year-old former Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev resigned abruptly in March and endorsed his ally President Kasym-Zhomart Tokayev as his successor as a shoo-in candidate.

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