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**FEATURE: KAZAKHSTAN MARKS VICTORY DAY ANNIVERSARY AMID SPREAD OF COVID-19**

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Xinhua (9 May 2020)

Nur-Sultan

Instead of parades and fireworks, Kazakhstan marked the 75th anniversary of the victory in the Great Patriotic War with some small-scale yet heart-warming events amid the spread of COVID-19

On the eve of the 75th Victory Day, Kazakh officials wearing face masks visited several veterans at their homes in Almaty, the largest Kazakh city, presenting them with flowers, letters and medals.

"We are proud of you, your feats and dedication have become real symbols of valor and patriotism for our generation," read a letter to veterans from the Kazakh Interior Ministry.

"We have already lived 75 years without a war. I hope that no wars will be seen in the future and younger generations will enjoy a peaceful life forever," said veteran Mikhail Prokopenko.

For the first time, this year's Immortal Regiment march has been switched to an online mode. Everyone can upload photos of their ancestors and their war stories with a corresponding hashtag on social media.

In the capital Nur-Sultan, flags, posters and billboards reading "Happy Victory Day," as well as images of St. George's ribbon, can be seen here and there.

On Friday night, with digital images of the "eternal flame" -- a symbol of a nation's perpetual gratitude towards and remembrance of its war dead -- appearing on landmark buildings in Nur-Sultan to mark the victory, local residents went to their balconies to join a flashmob to light up the city and sang wartime songs together.

Organizer Azat Abyken said that the event aims to encourage people to overcome difficulties at the moment. "Against the background of all (that) had happened to humanity this year, it is very important to get united, seek peace and support each other," the organizer said.

To mark the day, media outlets presented stories about the Great Patriotic War. In a podcast, Maria Solovieva, a Holocaust survivor from Almaty, shared her memories at the concentration camp of Ozarichi in Belarus, while front-line soldier Gennady Isimov recalled the bloody battles that he had participated in and his escape from a death camp over seven decades ago.

Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev recalled his family's sacrifice in World War II in a recent

interview with Tass News Agency, saying that the catastrophe had claimed the lives of his grandparents and his father also fought in the war.

"My father did not like to talk about the war -- especially about his deeds and his military awards like many other soldiers. He shared with us his feelings, the story of his first encounter with the enemy, the courage of the average soldier, and his burning desire to return home -- this was all written out in the autobiography 'The Soldier Left for War,'" said Tokayev.

In his congratulatory message on Friday, Tokayev stressed that the great holiday symbolizes the unparalleled feats of past generations who defended the country and crushed Nazism. He also wished all veterans good health and wellbeing.

Nursultan Nazarbayev, the first president of Kazakhstan, highlighted that May 9 is a symbol of courage, selflessness and heroism. "On this day we remember the unfadable courage of our fathers and grandfathers as well as their hardships," he said.

During World War II, around 1.2 million Kazakh people were sent to the front, and half of them never returned.

[http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-05/09/c\\_139043953.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-05/09/c_139043953.htm)

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