

# Regional Overview: Central Asia and the Caucasus 12-18 January 2020

[acleddata.com/2020/01/22/regional-overview-central-asia-and-the-caucasus-12-18-january-2020/](https://acleddata.com/2020/01/22/regional-overview-central-asia-and-the-caucasus-12-18-january-2020/)

Asena Karacalti, Ameneh Mehvar

January 22, 2020



**ACLED**  
Bringing clarity to crisis

During the past week, key developments in Central Asia and the Caucasus include the establishment of a border protocol between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan; protests over a new social aid policy in Kazakhstan; and a drop in the number of conflict events recorded in Afghanistan amid harsh winter conditions, and moves toward a potential new truce. Additionally, ceasefire violations continued to decline between Armenia and Azerbaijan, despite further reports of casualties.

Following another violent event on the border last week, the governments of **Kyrgyzstan** and **Tajikistan** signed a protocol regarding both countries' exclaves in the volatile Ferghana Valley and Batken region. On 11 January, Tajik and Kyrgyz villagers threw stones at each other near Kok-Tash village in Batken after Tajik villagers attacked a Kyrgyz villager driving through the area. The border services from both countries suppressed the violence, and on 14 January, the Kyrgyz and Tajik governments announced a plan to swap lands along the disputed border segment ([RFERL, 15 January 2020](#)). However, it remains unclear if the territory swap will sufficiently reduce tensions. The border incident triggered protests last week in Batken and Bishkek against the detention of six Kyrgyz villagers who took part in the riot ([15 January, The Diplomat](#)).

In **Kazakhstan**, women led protests in Kyzylorda, Nur-Sultan, Almaty, and Esik, in response to the government's decision to roll back monthly subsidies provided to families per child, proposing proportional financial aid. According to government representatives, the new system brings more targeted assistance to large families regardless of income and social status. However, many women claimed that the regulation excludes single mothers, mothers with disabled children, and smaller families living below the poverty line. The issue

has been on the agenda in Kazakhstan since February 2019, when a house fire killed five children while their parents worked low-wage night jobs to make ends meet. Women's groups have sporadically held protests in growing industrial cities like Almaty, Shymkent and Astana since the incident, calling for financial support, day-care facilities and extended maternity leave. The Kazakh government currently encourages women to have more children while also pushing for more women to join the labor force – goals that cannot be met without greater social assistance, according to the protesters ([RFERL, 14 January 2020](#)).

In **Afghanistan**, the number of violent events continued to decline, with reported fatalities dropping by more than one-third compared to the week prior. The reduction in violence is likely connected to heavy snowfall, flooding, and a large number of avalanches, which affected at least 11 out of 34 provinces from 12-15 January. Among the provinces hit worst by the severe weather conditions are Helman, Kandahar, Zabul, and Uruzgan ([IFRC, 20 January 2020](#)), where ACLED has recorded high insurgent activity in recent years.

Afghanistan's high mountains and harsh weather have traditionally promoted a reduction in fighting in winter; the snow impedes the ability of various armed groups to move freely and fighting becomes increasingly more difficult. Insurgents tend to use this time to rest and regroup ahead of their spring offensive ([RFE/RL, 8 January 2016](#)).

A further drop in violence in Afghanistan can be expected in the coming days: on 15 January, the Taliban offered a 7- to 10-day reduction in violence, though US officials have yet to respond. While the offer is reportedly limited to scaling back attacks on major cities and highways, it could significantly help to move the peace process forward ([NY Times, 16 January 2020](#)).

Ceasefire violations between **Azerbaijan** and **Armenia** continued at slightly lower levels compared to weeks prior. As reported by Azerbaijan's Ministry of Defence, there were 43 armed engagements along the Artsakh-Azerbaijan Line of Contact and 22 armed engagements along the Armenia-Azerbaijan Line of Contact. Casualties continue to rise, however, with an Armenian soldier wounded by Azerbaijani sniper fire on 16 January along the frontline in Tavush region.



ACLED is the highest quality, most widely used, real-time data and analysis source on political violence and protest around the world. Practitioners, researchers, and governments depend on ACLED for the latest reliable information on current conflict and disorder patterns. Data and analysis are found on [acleddata.com](https://acleddata.com).

© 2020 Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED). All rights reserved.