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Appendix II: Human Rights Watch Letter to Kyrgyzstan's Ministry of Labour, Social Welfare, and Migration

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October 28, 2024

Reference № KG-001-MLSWM202410-28

Ms. Jyldyz Polotova
Minister of Labour, Social Welfare, and Migration of the Kyrgyz Republic

Re: Questions to Government of Kyrgyzstan related to preliminary findings from
research on violations of rights of migrants from Kyrgyzstan in Russia

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Dear Minister Polotova,

On behalf of Human Rights Watch, please accept my regards.

I am writing to present a summary of Human Rights Watch's main findings from our research on xenophobia and violations of rights of migrants from Central Asia (including Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan) in Russia, which will be published in a report before the end of the year. We would like to reflect the views of the Government of Kyrgyzstan in the report and look forward to your response to this letter and our preliminary findings.

As you may know, Human Rights Watch is an independent, international, nonpartisan nongovernmental organization working in over 90 countries worldwide. We conduct research and carry out advocacy on a range of human rights issues, including the rights of migrants and asylum seekers. Recent examples of our work in this area include a 2021 report on abuses of asylum seekers by US border officials and a 2017 report on exploitation of construction workers on World Cup sites in Russia.

Preliminary Findings and Questions

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

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In the months following the March 22, 2024, attack on Crocus City Hall in Moscow, for which ISIS-Khorasan claimed responsibility, Russian and Central Asian media reported an escalation in Russia of xenophobia and violence against Central Asian migrants and other individuals without a Slavic appearance.

Russia's economy has long been dependent on migrant labor, yet migrant workers, particularly those from Central Asia, have for years faced persistent discrimination in Russia. The recent Crocus City Hall attack has exacerbated anti-migrant sentiment and discrimination, leading to a marked increase in ethnic profiling, arbitrary arrests, and violent reprisals against Central Asian communities by Russian police.

Rather than condemning these discriminatory actions, Russia's leadership has intensified its targeting of Central Asian migrants, including through passing harsher migrant-related legislation.

In June 2024 Human Rights Watch commenced research on this issue, documenting human rights violations perpetrated against Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Tajik migrants in Russia.

Migrant returnees in Kyrgyzstan and migrants in Russia told Human Rights Watch that they have experienced physical violence, including street violence by private actors, and excessive use of force and torture and ill-treatment by law enforcement officers. Physical intimidation was often accompanied by anti-migrant slurs and slogans, and sometimes escalated violence – including beatings by groups of people, attacks with pepper spray and knives, and destruction of migrant-owned property.

Human Rights Watch also documented how some migrants were subject to arbitrary and unjustified administrative controls at the border, including unlawful searches of their property, only to be barred from entering Russia and made to buy return tickets at their own expense, without explanation. They also described lengthy detentions at the airport followed by collective expulsions and re-entry bans.

Migrants who have successfully entered Russia have also experienced discriminatory refusal of their services and job dismissals, with no recourse for redress. Police subject them to arbitrary stops-and-checks, based on their non-Slavic appearance.

Thousands have been forced to return from Russia to Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan as subjects of summary deportation or collective expulsion orders.

Migrant returnees also told Human Rights Watch how there were attempts to force them to sign contracts with the Russian Ministry of Defense to serve in the war in Ukraine under threat of deportation or imprisonment for minor infractions of Russian administrative law. All of them have refused and forced to leave Russia.

Could the government of Kyrgyzstan please provide answers to the following questions:

6. What support does your government provide to Kyrgyz labor migrants in Russia?
7. In the last three years, have you tracked cases of such violence and if so, what has been your government's response to cases of xenophobic violence by private and state actors against Kyrgyz migrants in Russia? How has your government addressed the current rise in xenophobia towards Kyrgyz nationals following the Crocus City Hall attack? Please provide examples.
8. Has your government, through your embassies or otherwise, received requests from your citizens subjected to forced recruitment to Russia's war efforts in Ukraine, including recruitment in Russian [prisons](#)? If so, how has your government responded to this and to existing [reports](#) of forced recruitment ?
9. How is your government planning to respond to legal amendments that toughen Russia's migration policy, including provisions, adopted at both the federal and regional levels that have already been adopted that prohibit migrants from performing certain types of jobs as well as the "regime of banishment" that will be applicable to migrants from February 2025?
10. Have there been any discussions on how exactly these limitations will be applied to migrants from Kyrgyzstan, considering Kyrgyzstan's membership in the Eurasian Economic Union?

We kindly request any comments or information by November 11, 2024, so that we have adequate opportunity to reflect your relevant responses in our forthcoming publication. Please send your responses to Ms Syinat Sultanalieva by email at [REDACTED] or via Whatsapp/Telegram at +1 [REDACTED], or directly to me by email at [REDACTED].

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We appreciate the constructive dialogue we have with the government of Kyrgyzstan on the human rights of Kyrgyz citizens residing and working in Russia.

With thanks,



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