

## Kazakhstan



**Population:** 15,399,437  
**Population Growth Rate:** 0.392%  
**Birth Rate:** 16.6 births/1,000 population  
**Life Expectancy:** total population: 67.87 years; male: 62.58 years; female: 73.47 years  
**Literacy Rate:** total population: 99.5%; male: 99.8%; female: 99.3%  
**Net Migration Rate:** -3.3 migrant(s)/1000 population  
**Unemployment Rate:** 7.5%  
**Gross Domestic Product per Capita:** \$11,400  
**Religions:** Muslim 47%, Russian Orthodox 44%, Protestant 2%, other 7%  
**Languages:** Kazakh (Qazaq, state) 64.4%, Russian (official) 95%  
**Ethnic Groups:** Kazakh 53.4%, Russian 30%, Ukrainian 3.7%, Uzbek 2.5%, German 2.4%, Tatar 1.7%, Uygur 1.4%, other 4.9%  
**Capital:** Astana<sup>1</sup>

### Trafficking Routes

Kazakhstan is a country of origin, destination, and transit in the trafficking of men, women, and children for sexual exploitation and forced labor. Trafficking to and from Kazakhstan and neighboring Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan is common. Women trafficked from Kazakhstan and forced into the sex trade frequently arrive in other Central Asian states, and, likewise traffickers often select Kazakhstan as a destination for women trafficked out of those states. Many trafficked individuals are transported away from the region into Western Europe, Malaysia, Thailand, South Korea, China, and the United Arab Emirates.<sup>2</sup>

### Factors That Contribute to the Trafficking Infrastructure

There are a variety of reasons women, men, and children fall prey to human traffickers in Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries. In the post-Soviet world, Kazakhstan's economy has strengthened as it transitions to a democratic society. This

<sup>1</sup> CIA, THE WORLD FACTBOOK (2009), <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kz.html>.

<sup>2</sup> LIZ KELLY, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION (IOM), FERTILE FIELDS: TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS IN CENTRAL ASIA (2005), available at: <http://www.belgium.iom.int/pan-europeandialogue/documents/TRAFFICKING%20IN%20PERSONS%20IN%20CENTRAL%20ASIA.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>Kelly *supra* at 2.

has brought both positive and negative consequences, and unfortunately, those negative effects contribute to human trafficking. The growing economy has created a disparity in income between various social groups, and as the inequity grows, the poor become more vulnerable to human traffickers in an attempt to improve their economic situation.<sup>3</sup> Kazakhstan also has become more appealing to the destitute in neighboring countries, and it is their desire to find a more promising and financially successful future that leads them to fall victim to trafficking.<sup>4</sup>

As Kazakhstan struggles to develop into a democratic society, corruption has become widespread, especially within the government. Without an effective governing body to oversee the investigation of claims of corruption or to implement anticorruption legislation, this corruption is difficult to control.<sup>5</sup>

### **Forms of Trafficking**

Human trafficking is a highly profitable crime in Kazakhstan.<sup>6</sup> Trafficking humans to the country for forced labor is quite common. Because Kazakhstan is one of the more prosperous economies in the region, many people are willing to accept the offer of work there, only to be forced into servitude once they arrive, through seizure of documents, isolation, and intimidation.<sup>7</sup> Many from neighboring Kyrgyzstan are sold specifically into agriculture or household servitude.<sup>8</sup>

Individuals are trafficked to and from Kazakhstan for sexual exploitation. It is oftentimes the destination for women from Central Asian countries who have been tricked into the slave trade.<sup>9</sup>

### **Government Responses**

Kazakhstan's government was slow to react to the growing problem of human trafficking within its borders.<sup>10</sup> However, as the immigrant population trafficked for labor and sexual exploitation grew significantly, it brought a new wave of problems for the government, such as HIV/AIDS, and officials began to seriously consider the threats

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<sup>4</sup> Marina Baskakova, Elena Tiurukanova, and Dono Abdurazakova, *Human Trafficking in the CIS*, LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS/UNITED NATION DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, February, 2005, available at: <http://www.developmentandtransition.net/index.cfm?module=ActiveWeb&page=WebPage&DocumentID=577>.

<sup>5</sup> Kelly *supra* at 2.

<sup>6</sup> EUROPEAN FORUM FOR DEMOCRACY AND SOLIDARITY, KAZAKHSTAN (July 25, 2008), <http://www.europeanforum.net/country/kazakhstan>.

<sup>7</sup> Baskakova *supra* at 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Report: Kyrgyzstan a Human Trafficking and Transit Country*, WASHINGTON PROFILE, July 13, 2007, available at: <http://www.washprofile.org/en/node/6759>.

<sup>9</sup> Kelly *supra* at 2.

<sup>10</sup> ERICA MARAT, CENTRAL ASIA-CAUCASUS INSTITUTE SILK ROAD STUDIES PROGRAM, LABOR MIGRATION IN CENTRAL ASIA: IMPLICATIONS OF THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS, May 2009, available at: <http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/silkroadpapers/0905migration.pdf>.

posed by human trafficking.<sup>11</sup> Although the high level of government corruption slows efforts to combat trafficking, the government has taken several positive steps forward.

The government has begun to provide training for law enforcement officials to educate them on the issues associated with human trafficking and has increased regulations for places typically associated with facilitating trafficking, such as tourist agencies. They have also launched an education campaign to bring awareness on trafficking issues to high school and college students.<sup>12</sup>

Criminal codes have been amended to assist in prosecuting human traffickers. The Kazakh government appointed a deputy prime minister responsible for overseeing policies used to combat trafficking, and in 2005, the government of Kazakhstan ratified the U.N. convention against human trafficking.<sup>13</sup> On June 10, 2008, the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Center in the Karaganda Legal Institute of the Ministry of Internal Affairs was opened in Kazakhstan.<sup>14</sup>

### **Nongovernmental and International Organizations Responses**

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) works with other nongovernmental organizations within Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan to combat human trafficking. The IOM and cooperating agencies disseminate information to the public on the issue of trafficking in an effort to prevent vulnerable groups from becoming victims and to raise general awareness levels on the issue. They also facilitate training for these groups. Furthermore, the IOM helps trafficking victims obtain the necessary tools to recover and become reintegrated into society. The organization actively supports countertrafficking projects designed for the state of Kazakhstan.<sup>15</sup>

### **Multilateral Initiatives**

Kazakhstan has been cooperating with other nations, particularly those within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), to solidify policies that affect not only the state of Kazakhstan, but neighboring countries as well. As an active participant in the Budapest Process, Kazakhstan works with CIS states, among others, to combat the problems of human trafficking and smuggling of migrants, while also deciding on other relevant issues such as border management, visas, and regular migration.<sup>16</sup>

Kazakhstan has been working with members of the Eurasian Economic Community to address issues of border control. A 2005 agreement was put in place for visa-free travel between Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Tajikistan, and the Kyrgyz

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<sup>11</sup> Gulnoza Saidzimova, *Kazakhstan: A New Destination for Trafficked Women*, RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY, Mar. 15, 2006, available at: <http://www.rferl.org/content/Article/1066687.html>.

<sup>12</sup> *Id.* at 11.

<sup>13</sup> European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity *supra* at 6.

<sup>14</sup> Press Release, United States Diplomatic Mission to Kazakhstan, Official Opening of Anti-Trafficking in Persons Study Center (June 10, 2008), available at: <http://kazakhstan.usembassy.gov/pr-06-10-08.html>.

<sup>15</sup> IOM, KAZAKHSTAN-FACTS AND FIGURES (August 2007), available at: <http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/activities/asia-and-oceania/pid/506>.

<sup>16</sup> IOM, BUDAPEST PROCESS, <http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/policy-research/budapest-process/> (last viewed Sept. 10, 2009).

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Republic. The agreement is an attempt to solidify border policies between the neighboring states. Policy discussions are ongoing and will continue until the most effective policies for combating trafficking, while still facilitating border trade, can be found and implemented.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> DEVELOPMENT CENTER OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT, BLACK SEA AND CENTRAL ASIAN ECONOMIC OUTLOOK 130 (2008).