

Statement by the Socialist Movement of Kazakhstan on the situation in the country

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In Kazakhstan, there is now a real popular uprising, and from the very beginning the protests were of a social and class nature, as the doubling of the price of liquefied gas on the gas exchange was only the last straw in the overflowing cup of patience. After all, the protests began in Zhanaozen on the initiative of oil workers, which became a kind of political headquarters for the entire protest movement.

And the dynamics of this movement is indicative as it started as a social protest, but then it began to expand, and the labour collectives used the meetings to put forward their demands for a wage increase of 100%, the cancellation of the results of optimisation, the improvement of labour conditions and freedom of trade union activity. As a result, as early as 3 January the entire Mangistau region was covered by a general strike, which spilled over into the neighbouring Atyrau region.

Notably, as early as January 4, oil workers at Tengizchevroil, where the participation of American companies reaches 75%, went on strike. It was there that in December last year 40,000 workers were laid off and a new round of layoffs was planned. They were supported later in the day by oil workers of Aktobe and West Kazakhstan and Kyzylorda regions.

Moreover, in the evening of the same day strikes of miners of Armel or Mittal Temirtau in Karaganda region and of copper smelters and miners of Kazakhmys corporation began, which can be already regarded as a general strike in the whole extractive industry of the country. There were also demands for higher wages, lowering of the retirement age, the right to trade unions and strikes.

Meanwhile, on Tuesday, open-ended strikes already started in Atyrau, Uralsk, Aktyubinsk, Kyzyl-Orda, Taraz, Taldykorgan, Turkestan, Shymkent, Ekibastuz, in towns of Almaty region and in Almaty itself, where blocking of streets has already in the night from 4 to 5 of January led to open clash of demonstrators with police, as a result of which akimat of city was temporarily seized. This gave Kassym-Jomart Tokayev grounds for declaring a state of emergency.

It should be noted that these demonstrations in Almaty were already attended mainly by unemployed youth and internal migrants living in the suburbs of the metropolis and working in temporary or low-paid jobs. And attempts to placate them with promises to reduce gas price to 50 tenge, separately for Mangistau oblast and Almaty have not satisfied anyone.

Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's decision to dismiss the government, and then to dismiss Nursultan Nazarbayev, the chairman of the Security Council, did not stop the protests either, as mass protest rallies began on 5 January in those oblast centres of Northern and Eastern Kazakhstan, where there were none before – in Petropavlovsk, Pavlodar, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Semipalatinsk. At the same time,

in Aktobe, Taldykorgan, Shymkent and Almaty, attempts were made to take the buildings of regional akimats by storm.

In Zhanaozen itself, the workers in their indefinite rally formulated new demands – the resignation of the current president and all Nazarbayev officials, the restoration of the 1993 Constitution and the related freedoms to create parties and trade unions, the release of political prisoners and the end of repression. The Council of Aksakals was established as an informal body of power.

In this way, demands and slogans were transmitted to the entire movement, which are now used in various cities and regions, and the struggle was given a political content. There are also attempts on the ground to create committees and councils to coordinate the struggle.

At the same time, troops were brought to Almaty, Aktau and Zhanaozen. While in the Mangistau Province, all passed peacefully, and the soldiers refused to disperse demonstrators, in the southern capital skirmishes began, and in the night of January 5 to 6 special divisions were brought in to begin the mopping-up operation of the airport and the blocks seized by the rebels. According to various reports, there are already dozens of deaths on the part of the demonstrators.

In this situation there is a danger that all protests and strikes will be violently suppressed and the country must be completely paralysed by a general strike. It is therefore urgent to form united action committees along territorial and industrial lines to offer organised resistance to

the military-police terror.

In this connection we also need the support of the entire international workers' and communist movement and left-wing associations, with the aim of organising a major campaign in the world.

The socialist movement in Kazakhstan demands:

An immediate cessation of hostilities against its people and the withdrawal of troops from the cities!

The immediate resignation of all Nazarbayev officials, including President Tokayev!

Release of all political prisoners and detainees!

Ensuring the right to form their own trade unions, political parties, and to hold strikes and meetings!

Legalisation of the activities of the banned Communist Party of Kazakhstan and the Socialist Movement of Kazakhstan!

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We call on all workers and laborers of the country to implement the demand of the executed Zhanaozen oil workers – to nationalize all extractive and large-scale industries under the control of labor collectives!