
EU DEEPENS CENTRAL ASIA TIES AS RIGHTS RECORD VARIES ACROSS REGION

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The European Union is rapidly deepening its trade, investment, and political ties with Central Asia, even as its latest assessment points to worsening human rights conditions across much of the region. The latest assessments are contained in the EUs annual Human Rights and Democracy in the World country reports, which separately examine all five Central Asian states.

In Kazakhstan, the EU notes judicial and political reforms, as well as continued implementation of measures aimed at strengthening protection against gender-based violence. Brussels also points to a shrinking space for civil society, growing pressure on journalists and independent media, increased oversight of NGOs, and continued restrictions on peaceful assembly. As part of the UN Universal Periodic Review, Kazakhstan accepted 259 of the 294 recommendations it received.

The assessment of Kyrgyzstan is notably harsher. The EU says the human rights situation continued to deteriorate and highlights the new media law, mandatory registration for all media outlets, a 35% cap on foreign ownership, and prosecutions of media workers that it describes as seemingly politically motivated. Another source of concern was the closure of the National Center for the Prevention of Torture, whose functions were transferred to the Ombudspersons Office.

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