



Genocide Watch
The Alliance Against Genocide

Country Report: Kazakhstan October 2021

[Kazakhstan](#) is the homeland of the Kazakh, a traditionally nomadic Turkic ethnic group that adheres to Sunni Islam. Its land area of 2,724,900 square kilometers (1,052,100 sq. mi.) is the size of western Europe. Kazakhs make up 65% of [Kazakhstan's](#) population of 18.7 million people, with 19% comprised of Russians, and 16% of other ethnicities.

The Russian Empire took control of Kazakhstan in the 1800's, set up a colonial government, and made Russian the official language. From the mid-1800's to the 1980's, Russia encouraged over 1,400,000 Russian, Ukrainian, German, Tatar, and Jewish peasants to settle on the Kazakh Steppe. In 1920, the Bolsheviks established the [Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic](#).

The Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin and the First Kazakh Party Secretary Filipp Goloshchyokin, implemented a policy of [forced sedentarization](#) in 1930 that deprived Kazakh livestock herders of their traditional income and food source. In 1931 - 1933, Kazakhstan was the victim of Soviet imposed genocide. Between 1.5 and 2.3 million Kazakhs starved to death in the manmade [Kazakh or Goloshchyokin Famine](#). After the famine, only 38% percent of Kazakhstan's population was ethnic Kazakh. The Russian government and some scholarly genocide deniers refuse to call this intentional mass starvation "genocide," just as they deny that the 1932-1933 Ukrainian Holodomor was genocide.

Kazakhstan gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Since then, Kazakhstan has been ruled by the [authoritarian government](#) of President Nursultan Nazarbayev. Nazarbayev maintains a cult of personality, reflected in his name for the new capital, Nur-Sultan, the world's second coldest capital city.

Nazarbayev and his government torture and execute dissidents, rig elections, and violently break up protests. In 2011, Kazakh authorities murdered 14 striking oil workers in the city of [Zhanaozen](#). Ethnic minorities in Kazakhstan face discrimination and oppression. In February 2020, the Dungan community (an ethnic Chinese Muslim group) in the Jambyl region of South Kazakhstan was targeted in a series of [violent pogroms](#) by Kazakh mobs, which killed eleven and forcibly displaced 20,000 people, most of whom fled to Kyrgyzstan.

Kazakhstan has among the world's largest reserves of oil, gas, coal, iron, gold, [uranium](#), [chromium](#), lead, [zinc](#), [manganese](#) and copper. Since the demise of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan has attracted over \$30 billion in foreign investment. The Kazakh per capita GDP is about \$30,000 per year.

Kazakhstan has an intensely authoritarian government. The willingness of the government and Kazakh vigilantes to use violence against minorities indicates a potential for genocide. Genocide Watch considers Kazakhstan to be at **Stage 5: Organization**, **Stage 6: Polarization**, and **Stage 8: Persecution**.

Genocide Watch Recommends:

- The EU, US, and other NATO countries should condition their imports of Kazakh oil, gas, uranium and metals on the Nazarbayev regime's improvement of human rights protection.
- Western foreign policy makers should be educated about Kazakhstan's history, including the Kazakh Genocide, the Zhanaozen massacre and the 2020 attacks on the Dungan.
- The Kazakh Famine of 1932 - 1933 should be officially recognized as genocide, along with other crimes committed by the Soviet Union, including the Ukrainian Holodomor.