



Ressort: Politik

OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media statement

Rome/Vienna, 12.01.2022 [ENA]

On 12 January 2022, following the recent events in Kazakhstan, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Teresa Ribeiro expressed her concern about the media freedom situation in the country. She calls for safe working conditions for journalists and other media workers under all circumstances, as well as a restoration of internet access in the country. Since the violent clashes in Kazakhstan that started a week ago,

many national and international journalists and offices of media outlets have come under attack. There were reports about short-term detention of media workers across the country and foreign correspondents being denied entry to the country. Access to internet in Kazakhstan has been restricted, leaving the population without sufficient information on the events. Videos shared widely on social media showed thousands of people taking to the streets. It was a rare hotbed of dissent in Kazakhstan, where protests are tightly controlled. Security forces fought to quell the crowd, which began storming public offices and setting fire to buildings.

The protests began in the western province of Mangistau, known to be an oil-producing region, on January 2. Then, the epicenter of the protests moved to Almaty, the largest city in Kazakhstan, where protesters gathered for three consecutive days. What began as a peaceful protest turned into a full-fledged conflict as demonstrators confronted the security forces. Police attempted to control the crowd with tear gas, stun grenades and blocks.

President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev also defended his decision to invite Russian-led troops to the country and said doubts about the legality of that mission stemmed from a lack of information.

Speaking alongside Tokayev, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that the military alliance of the former Soviet states prevented "terrorists, criminals, looters and other criminal elements" from undermining the foundations of power in Kazakhstan and said that his troops would be withdrawn once the mission was completed.

Putin said the CSTO would not allow "color revolutions" to take place, a reference to several popular revolutions in former Soviet countries over the past two decades, including Ukraine and Georgia.

Military forces are also operating in Kazakhstan, sent, as well as from Moscow, by the other allies gathered in the CSTO, namely Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

An armed presence - defined as a "peacekeeping force" - which is constantly monitored by the European

Redaktioneller Programmdienst: European News Agency

Annette-Kolb-Str. 16
D-85055 Ingolstadt
Telefon: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.660
Telefax: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.661
Email: contact@european-news-agency.com
Internet: european-news-agency.com

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Union.

“Media are here to inform the public in a free, fair and independent way. This is a vital function in any society. Journalists must therefore be safe to do their work, under all circumstances,” Ribeiro said. “Also, unrestricted access to information, offline and online, represents important elements of public security and should always be respected,” she added. “I call on the authorities of Kazakhstan to preserve, protect and advance media freedom in the country for the benefit and comprehensive security of the country and the OSCE region at large.”

The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media observes media developments in all 57 OSCE participating States. She provides early warning on violations of freedom of expression and media freedom and promotes full compliance with OSCE media freedom commitments.

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**Redaktioneller Programmdienst:
European News Agency**

Annette-Kolb-Str. 16
D-85055 Ingolstadt
Telefon: +49 (0) 841-951. 99.660
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