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Congressional Documents and Publications

June 28, 2010

TLHRC Hearing: Kyrgyzstan

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Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission (TLHRC)

Hearing:

A Region in Crisis:

The Violent Conflict in Kyrgyzstan

Thursday, July 1

10 - 11:30 a.m.

2200 Rayburn HOB

Please join the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission for a hearing on Kyrgyzstan, where, according to the latest U.N. estimates, escalating violence in the predominantly Uzbek South of Kyrgyzstan has internally displaced 300,000 people and forced approximately 90,000 to seek refuge in Uzbekistan. The hearing is open to the media and the public.

When opposition forces stormed government offices in April of this year, the government of Kurmanbek Bakiyev, which came to power in the 2005 Tulip Revolution, effectively came to an end. Allegations of corruption, nepotism, human rights abuses, as well as discontent over increased energy prices and economic inequality, turned public opinion against Bakiyev. The opposition was quick to form an interim government led by former foreign minister Roza Otunbayeva, who initiated a referendum on a new Constitution, which was held on June 27, and promised to hold elections in October. Almost 90 percent of voters supported the adoption of a new constitution in the referendum, and the OSCE issued a statement saying that despite some shortcomings the referendum was conducted peacefully and in a transparent manner. However, the interim government has so far failed to exercise control over the south of the country, where Bakiyev loyalists have a stronghold. On June 10, riots broke out in Osh, after which the disorder spread to the neighboring Jalal Abad region. The government declared an emergency situation and dispatched additional military and police forces to the region. The violence left at least 264 dead and approximately 2,200 injured, though the government estimates that the true number is 10 times higher.

The security situation of Kyrgyzstan remains precarious and there are serious concerns regarding the stability of the entire region. Lawlessness persists in the south which has created spaces for extremism and criminality. United Nations aid agencies have reported that tens of thousands of Uzbek refugees are returning to their Kyrgyz homes, which requires U.N. agencies to revise their assistance operations.

To discuss these issues we welcome the following witnesses:

- o Jeff Goldstein, senior policy analyst, Open Society Institute
- o Donna Wright, director of the Europe and Eurasia division, American Bar Association
- o Eric McGlinchey, assistant professor, George Mason University

o Rachel Denber, Human Rights Watch

If you have any questions, please contact Hans Hogrefe (Rep. McGovern) or Elizabeth Hoffman (Rep. Wolf) at 202-225-3599.

/s/James P. McGovern, M.C. /s/Frank R. Wolf, M.C.

Co-Chair, TLHRC Co-Chair, TLHRC

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