

Kyrgyzstan blames Uzbeks for provoking ethnic conflict

On 11 January in Bishkek, the national commission examining the causes of the events in the country's south in June 2010, when as a result of clashes between local Kyrgyz and Uzbeks over 400 people were killed, presented the results of its work. According to the findings of the commission, the greatest responsibility for the tragedy is borne by the Uzbek minority's leaders. The results of the commission's work clearly correspond to the expectations of the Kyrgyz majority, namely that the case be closed and blame assigned to the Uzbeks (although they were clearly the more injured party).

Among the parties responsible for the tragedy, the Commission lists the entourage of the deposed President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, religious extremists, organised criminal groups, the clumsy actions of the power institutions, the negligent central government, as well as 'unknown forces', not described in any greater detail, but presumably the foreign intelligence services of third countries. By far the largest responsibility, however, is placed on the leaders of Kyrgyzstan's Uzbeks (who make up about 30% of the population in the south); exploiting the chaos after Bakiyev's overthrow in April 2010, they aggressively sought to strengthen their position in the country, which provoked a counter-reaction by the Kyrgyz community.

The situation in the south of Kyrgyzstan is still tense, and anti-Uzbek sentiments still run high among the Kyrgyz. The official closure of the investigation of the June events, blaming the Uzbeks and blurring the Kyrgyz side's responsibility, not only fails to provide an opportunity to normalise the situation, but in fact increases the likelihood of further outbreaks of violence. <MMat>