

Unrest in Kyrgyzstan

Although the wave of bloody tensions on ethnic grounds in the south of Kyrgyzstan has died down (9 -12 June), the situation in the country remains very unstable. Security and the representative nature of the constitutional referendum scheduled for 27 June, whose main objective is to legalise the interim authorities and to stabilise the country political, remain uncertain.

On 9 – 12 June, in the south of Kyrgyzstan (Osh, Jalalabad and the vicinity) clashes and pogroms between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks resulted in several hundred casualties (the official figure is 208) and approximately 400,000 refugees (mainly Uzbeks). Fights, ethnic cleansing and assaults – however on a decidedly smaller scale – still continue and no effective measures have been taken in order to settle the problem in a political manner. There has also been a growing threat of ethnic tensions breaking out in the so far relatively calm north of the country, which is indicated by both the atmosphere in society and media materials. The authorities are accusing the followers of the former president Kurmanbek Bakiyev, who was overthrown in April, of escalating tensions; the media is mentioning “external forces”.

In the current situation it is almost impossible to effectively conduct the referendum, planned for 27 June, on the new constitution and recognition of the interim president Roza Otunbayeva (among other factors, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe withdrew its observers). The tense situation in Kyrgyzstan and the still disputed legality of the interim government - irrespective of the results of the referendum – do not give much hope for a rapid stabilisation of the situation in Kyrgyzstan. <ks>