

Kazakhstan: the law on the leader of the nation opens the door to succession

Aleksandra Jarosiewicz

On 15 June two new constitutional laws granting the current president, Nursultan Nazarbayev, the lifelong status of the leader of the nation entered into force. The laws guarantee Nazarbayev formal and decisive influence on the state policies after his resignation from office, a wide immunity for him and his family and also open the door to a safe succession of presidential power in the future.

The new laws impose on the government the necessity to consult the most important political decisions with the leader, guarantee the current president a place in the Constitutional Council and the Security Council. The new legislation also secures Nazarbayev full immunity and protection from criminal and administrative responsibility for actions undertaken during his presidency, the immunity of the leader's and his family's assets. The adopted laws both complement the earlier, more limited ones that strengthen presidential power and are a reflection of the actual state: the dominant and almost unchallenged position of President Nazarbayev in the political life of Kazakhstan. The new laws also attenuate the problem of presidential succession: in recent years it was the reason for the biggest conflicts among the Kazakh elite. Currently, it is very likely (and has also been suggested by the president's close circle) that a new president – put forward by Nazarbayev – will be selected in 2012 but formal control over him/her and the state will be kept by the leader of the nation and at the same time this will create a sense of safety for the elite. <ks>