

Kyrgyzstan: unsuccessful 'counter-revolution' in country's south

On 13-14 May, opponents of the interim government took over the local government buildings and blockaded airfields in the main towns of Kyrgyzstan's southern districts. The authorities regained control thanks to the deployment of internal troops (in Osh) and the use of its own supporters (in Jalalabad). Three people died and several dozens were injured in the clashes. The interim government called these events an attempt at counter-revolution funded by representatives of the regime of Kurmanbek Bakiev, who was overthrown on 7 April. Irrespective of the real causes, these events confirmed the weakness of the government's control over the country.

The numbers of the interim government's opponents ranged from a few dozens in Batken to 1500 in Jalalabad. Their main demand was the restoration of the previous regional governors. The protests brought forth counter-demonstrations by government supporters (including Uzbeks, who are numerous in the south), as a result of which armed clashes broke out. With the exception of Osh, the police did not react to the disturbances. In the Jalalabad region, supporters of the new government burned down Bakiev's house in his home village. The interim government arrested one of the president's former advisers and accused him of organising the protests for money from Bakiev's son (allegedly US\$1 million). They also issued recordings of his telephone conversations with deputies from the dissolved parliament, in which he urged them to support the 'counter-revolution'.

It is hard to establish to what extent the events of 13-14 May constituted a real attempt to overthrow the new government, or were an expression of the dissatisfaction of people linked to the former regime by family ties and economic interest. Nevertheless, they confirmed that although the interim government's political position does not seem to be threatened, it has a weak hold on the country and its local agencies are in a bad shape.

<MMat>