

# SPEECH

at the 76<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Committee against Torture  
May 2, 2023, Geneva

Topic: "Investigation of January events."

**Dear Mr. Claude Heller!**  
**Dear Committee members!**

The January tragedy **shocked Kazakhstan** and was a vital lesson for us.

To date, key organisers have been identified, including criminal elements and senior officials.

All the deceased have been **identified**, and their causes of death have been investigated.

The **torture** cases are about to be finalised.

Let me show you a **video** to present **a realistic picture** of the events and the grave **consequences**.

Please pay attention to the screen.

(Video demonstration, 8 min.)

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**Dear ladies and gentlemen!**

This footage shows how much our **statehood was under threat** during those days.

**Human lives** - the most core value have been put at risk.

Only owing to the **President's** decisive actions, has it been possible to **overcome** the crisis and save the country.

I will start with the chronology of events.

Since January 1, the residents of the western regions have demanded a reduction in the price of gas, and **initially**, the rallies **were peaceful**.

**There were no political**, but only socio-economic demands.

The government satisfied the demand to lower gas prices and then resigned.

Despite this, people started rioting.

The representatives of local authorities and members of parliament have repeatedly met with the population, asking them to remain calm and not to disrupt public order.

On January 3, 4 and 5, the **Head of State delivered speeches** and called for respect for the law and not to fall for the provocations of destructive forces.

Nevertheless, criminal and radical elements **in 11 regions have provoked violent actions.**

They coordinated the actions of the crowd through social media. They armed them with rebars, stones, and Molotov cocktails and **began looting, even setting fire to the premises** on the ground floors of high-rise buildings to cover up the evidence of their crimes.

They purposefully seized the government, police and National Security Committee buildings.

They attacked airports and looted hunting shops to arm themselves.

They tried to **get on the TV broadcast**, and when that failed, they looted and set fire to the offices of the TV companies.

The rioters forced civilians to join them; those who disagreed were assaulted. In Almaty, for example, a well-known musician, **Bitayev**, was shot dead after he refused to give his car to the rioters.

**Over 3 500** law enforcement officers were injured, totalling 80% of all injured in those days.

Even in these circumstances, no shots were fired at the attackers!

The law enforcement officers tried to restrain the violence until the end, limiting themselves to non-lethal means of restraint.

However, it did not stop the crowd.

The attackers burned down the Akimat (city administration) building in Almaty, where a police officer was burned alive.

In Kyzylorda, a truck was hijacked, and soldiers were deliberately run over; one died on the spot. A total of 19 law enforcement officers were killed.

**765 vehicles were burned**, and 46 of them were ambulances. 1 466 buildings and structures were damaged. The damage exceeded 100 billion tenges (about 240 million U.S. dollars).

Around three thousand firearms have been stolen. Only a third has been recovered so far (1 016).

The ultimate goal of these actions was a **forced seizure of power**.

### **Dear ladies and gentlemen!**

I want to draw special attention to the fact that, in Almaty, law enforcement officers used combat weapons for the first time on January 5.

And then, the weapons were used to repel the attacks on law enforcement and government buildings when the unrest escalated into a violent phase.

It is explicitly stipulated in the laws on law enforcement, military service and counter-terrorism in the event of crises.

Such a **threatening situation** took place on January 5-8. We believe the applied security measures were **proportionate** to the threats in this critical situation.

During the clashes, while repelling attacks, during the state of emergency and counter-terrorist operation, regrettably, **238 citizens** were killed.

The death toll is **accurate** and cross-checked during investigations. These figures are shown on the slide.

A total of **1 237** people were arrested on criminal charges.

Prosecutors verified each arrest.

Detainees include the members of organised criminal groups, extremists and those with a criminal record.

Today, we can state that the operation to overthrow the country's top leadership was planned meticulously.

To be precise, there was an attempted coup d'état involving the leadership of the National Security Committee. The former chairman of the National Security Committee and his three deputies have now been sentenced to long-term imprisonment.

The **former Minister of Defence**, who left strategic military facilities unprotected during the state of emergency, was also convicted (12 years of imprisonment).

A total of **1 273** people were convicted for participating in "**January events**". Specifically, for participation in and organisation of mass riots, theft, robbery and burglary,

(deprivation of liberty - 211, restriction of liberty - 527, conditional sentence - 503, community service - 10, fine - 5). (Of these, 418 for participation in or organisation of mass riots).

As an act of humanity towards the participants in the "January events", the Amnesty Act was passed, and **1 151** persons were pardoned.

Amnesty **has not been applied** to persons who have committed **torture**, terrorist offences or especially grave crimes.

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Disappointingly, law enforcement officers tolerated the **torture** of the detainees amid the unrest.

**There is no excuse** for that.

The persons who committed torture will be duly punished irrespective of their ranks or positions.

All allegations of torture by citizens have been registered and are being investigated.

Cases against **35** police and National Security Committee officers have been submitted to the court. Eighty-four people are

acknowledged victims.

5 police officials who tortured 23 detainees in Taldykorgan city with a steam iron have been exposed and convicted. Besides, the Head of the Police Department was convicted. Upon his silent consent torture was tolerated and 8 of his subordinates are being also brought to criminal liability.

Undoubtedly, there are difficulties in investigating torture. There is corporate solidarity. Colleagues cover up for their employees, destroy evidence, and can put pressure on victims. During arrests, officers of special forces wore masks and could not be identified by the victims. Despite all this, we do not hide the cases of torture. On the contrary, we ensure the inevitability of punishment.

For example, it was only after prosecutors investigated and exhumed the corpse that we established a violent cause of death of Rakhmetov, who died in the building of the Almaty City Police Department. The medical examiner indicated the cause of death as heart disease. After reviewing the medical records, we exhumed the corpse. The second examination concluded that the cause of death was an injury to the cervical spine. The expert who made the false conclusion is now facing criminal charges. An investigation of Rakhmetov's torture is currently underway, and the responsible persons have not yet been identified.

The President of Kazakhstan has set a mandate to “eliminate absolutely the negative phenomenon of torture”.

Since January 1 of this year, only prosecutors have been investigating all acts of torture.

Necessary instructions have been developed based on the Istanbul Protocol.

Today, all **submitted torture reports** and statements are **immediately registered** and investigated.

To prevent torture, non-procedural contact with detainees has been banned, interrogations must be performed in transparent rooms with video recording, and using video badges during arrests and transfers is mandatory.

Meanwhile, we are introducing a continuous video surveillance system. There are **over 22 thousand** video cameras in law enforcement buildings, and 1 800 more will be installed by the end of the year.

52 penitentiary institutions have already been equipped with video cameras, and prosecutors have online access to them. We are now working on eliminating blind spots.

This year, video footage was used as evidence in 36 criminal cases of torture.

An electronic form of recording bodily injuries and psychological trauma was adopted for the use of medical professionals.

### **Dear ladies and gentlemen!**

The “January events” overshadowed all the positive results of our work in combating torture.

I assure you that Kazakhstan does not hide the facts of torture; on the contrary, we investigate and prosecute the persons responsible. The main priorities of our work are lined up to ensure “zero torture tolerance”.

Again, I want to emphasise that we have learned specific lessons from the tragic “January events”, and the government has set a course to form the New Kazakhstan.

One of the key areas of our reforms is the de-monopolisation of the economy, the fight against oligopoly, kleptocracy, and the recovery of illegally transferred capital, which will be used to solve issues in the social sphere.

In June 2022, a special commission was established by

Presidential Decree to recover the illegally transferred assets. To date, more than 1.5 billion US dollars have been recovered from abroad.

Meanwhile, I want to draw your attention to the fact that Kazakhstan is facing an information attack; there is much fake and false information. The provocateurs are trying to discredit the ongoing reforms to destabilise the socio-political situation in the country.

It has been confirmed by the exposure of 22 organisers and perpetrators who attacked, threatened and set fire to the property of journalists and bloggers who criticise the current government to exemplify that freedom of expression is limited in Kazakhstan.  
([Tokarev, Klebanov](#))

Thus, please use only reliable, verified information, and judge our efforts in implementing the Committee's recommendations with this in mind.

**Thank you for your attention!**