Project is financed by the European Union

international **alert**

The Influence of Kyrgyzstan's Media Strategies on Preventing the Spread of the Ideology of Violent Extremism

Authors: Elima Ibraimova, Baitur Toktosunov
Mentor: Inga Sikorskaya

Abstract

This study reflects the results of research conducted over a period of 6 months (from March 2019 to August 2019). Analysis of existing media strategies in state bodies (MIA, SCRA, SCNS), including three NGOs and civic activists was conducted. In addition, 300 respondents in the cities of Uzgen, Bishkek and Aravan were surveyed for effective identification of youth involvement in the Internet environment. Methods such as desk research, questionnaires, expert interviews were used in the course of the study and analysis of previous research in the field of countering and preventing extremism.

Methodology

As part of the research, qualitative and quantitative methodology was used.
The main emphasis in the qualitative and quantitative research was put on the following components: assessment, analysis, identification, study and comparison of existing media strategies in Kyrgyzstan.

Introduction

Nowadays extremism is one of the most crucial issues. As of February 1, 2019, 546 people were convicted of terrorism and extremism in Kyrgyzstan[1]. This is confirmed by the data provided by the GPO of the Kyrgyz Republic: 110 criminal cases were initiated due to the participation of Kyrgyzstani citizens in the Syrian combat zone over 2018[3]. Materials on the suppression of extremism were published in progress reports of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, whereby an active leader of "Hizb Ut-Tahrir al-Islami"[4] was detained in the first half of 2019, and firearms and ammunition were found from other active members of religious extremist organizations. Today, terrorist groups are actively using the latest information technology and the Internet. Random citizens are being drawn into these processes.

Internet portals are the biggest potential threats (electronic mass media, radical movement web-sites, etc.)[5]. Propaganda sources include Internet forums, blogs, video hosting, as well as, to a higher degree, social networks and instant messengers. According to the ruling of the courts of the Kyrgyz Republic, 220 Internet accounts were blocked in 2018 for distrib-

1. National Prison Service: http://gsin.gov.kg/ru/presssluzhba/novosti/gsin-rabotaet-po-deradikalizacii-osuzhdennyh-za-terrorizm-i-jekstremizm.html
2. Akipress 25.04.2019: https://svodka.akipress.org/news:1542955
3. Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami - an international religious and political party banned in Kyrgyzstan.
4. Yuzhakova T. A., Lashin R. L. Prevention of the ideology of terrorism and extremism in education and on the Internet, Обзор НЦПТИ. 2013. №3. URL: https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/profilaktika-ideologii-terrorizma-i-ekstremizma-v-obrazovatelnoy-srede-i-seti-internet.
5. Attorney General Otkurbek Dzhamshitov at a meeting of Parliamen on 17.04.2019, http://kant.kg/2019-04-17/v-2018-godu-po-resheniyu-sudov-byli-zablokirovany-220-internet-akkauntov/

uting propaganda materials of extremist nature[6].

According to the State Penitentiary Service[7], the number of people convicted of extremism and terrorism has grown by 5 times since 2012. Various acts of radical nature pose a real threat to national security, because all its forms, regardless of motives, are aimed at changing the existing structure of society through fear and intimidation of people. The number of recruits enrolled by extremist groups in Kyrgyzstan is growing each year.

According to domestic and foreign theologians and experts, the main causes of youth radicalization are, first of all, lack of awareness, lack of religious education and socio-economic reasons[8]. The most important factors that cause young people to join illegal armed groups are the low level of regional economic development and high unemployment rate among the population against the backdrop of demographic growth[9].

Analysis of Existing Media Strategies

Analysis of media in Kyrgyzstan revealed that the strategies implemented by state bodies or non-governmental organizations represent action plans and the use of a specific set of media tools to prevent the spread of extremist ideology.

Today, the majority of religious associations in Kyrgyzstan have public relations structures (press services, press secretaries, communication departments, external relations departments, etc.). Through the use of these channels, they try to explain to the population what propaganda of violent extremism is and what consequences this can have and how to counter it.

The analysis of the above media strategies has shown that measures taken to counter extremism are more preventive and analytical in nature. Only the SCNS has a media strategy to prevent the spread of the ideology of extremism on the Internet, whereby Internet sites of religious extremist

nature are blocked. On the part of the Kyrgyz Government, a significant contribution to the National Media Strategy is Cybersecurity Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2019-2023 put into effect this year. There are few measures to ensure cybersecurity in the public sector, since audit and processing of personal data cannot entirely contribute to ensuring security; probably, the availability of cybersecurity specialists in each of the state bodies would be more effective in achieving the common goal of countering extremism and ensuring national security. Creation of a training center for government institutions' employees would also have the desired effect.

There are several types of external communications: interconfessional relations, public relations and relations with authorities. The main communication channels include, inter alia, communication with society through mass media and information posted on official websites. For example, the Muftiyat's official website regularly publishes news, articles, reports on activities undertaken and the activities of the clergy participating in the discussion of various pressing issues on the agenda of conferences, etc.

Recently, social media (blogs, micro blogs, social networks, multimedia resources) have become a particularly significant and effective channel of relations between religious leaders and the public. Thus, many theologians like Chubak Azhy and Kadyr Malikov, became popular due to the active media marketing.

Regarding local channels of communication between religion and society, social media accounts have been established, for example an account on "Instagram" called "Minute for the Soul", or another account called "Islam Nuru". Both accounts are very popular among young people, this is illustrated by the number of the subscribers (26.8 thousand and 302 thousand approximately), who regularly ask questions of interest to them

7. The State Penitentiary Service under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic is a law enforcement, state executive body that implements state policy on the activities of the penal system. (From the provision on the State Penitentiary Service under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic)

8. Opinion of Kadyr Malikov, theologian, member of the Ulema Council of Kyrgyzstan (from the video bridge "How to curb the spread of radical ideology among Muslims in the CIS": https://24.kg/obschestvo/75314/

9. Yahyaev M. Y. Causes of the radicalization of Islam in the modern world, Исламоведение. 2012. №2. URL: https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/prichiny-radikalizatsii-islama-v-sovremennom-mire
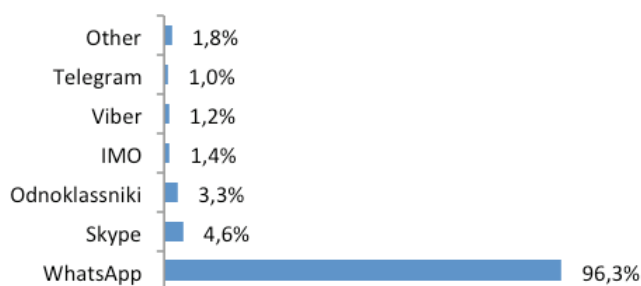
by means of personal messages and get feedback from administrators of these groups - bloggers who preach Islam. Variety of tools for presenting information is also large: photos, video materials, comments, exchange of opinions, etc.

Indicators of Youth Online Activity

In the course of our survey in three regions of the country, it was identified that 94% of the total number of respondents use the Internet regularly. Moreover, the vast majority of the respondents are from 16 to 18 years old. The question: "Where do you get information from?" was answered by 62% of respondents in Bishkek the following way: "from social media"; the same option was chosen by 46% of respondents in Uzgen, and 41% in Aravan respectively. Most young citizens prefer the Facebook platform rather than Instagram or VKontakte. A total of 670 000 Kyrgyzstanis are registered on this network; youth between the ages of 18-24 amounted to 47.8%. Regarding instant messengers: the vast majority of young people use the WhatsApp application. Much less often, users of the Internet web visit news and entertainment sites, film web resources, as well as receive information by mail. The Russian Mail.ru service is most often used among the mail sites, the second most popular is Gmail.

When asked about activity on social networks, most respondents from the three regions click "like" button and share or comment. There are
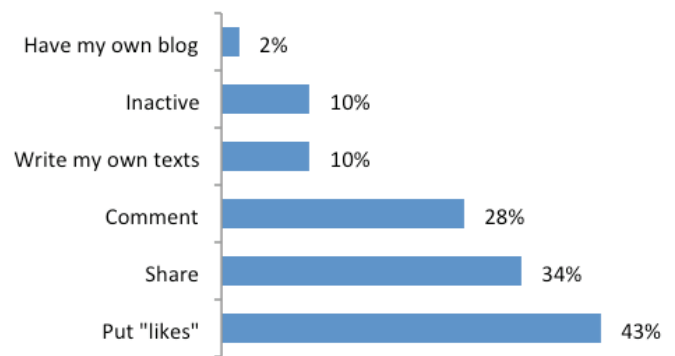
Social media activity

Have my own blog	2%
Inactive	10%
Write my own texts	10%
Comment	28%
Share	34%
Put "likes"	43%

the language of the content. Thus, the content of elements of violence is higher in the Kyrgyz and Uzbek language pages rather than in the Russian language sources. Therefore, we also included the question of language preference in the questionnaire and the majority of respondents chose Russian language (77%), second is Kyrgyz language (59%), and then Uzbek language (9%) and English language (5%).

The majority of respondents (77%) does not face information of a radical nature on the Internet or find it too rarely (9%). In addition, most of the surveyed identify such information by content (56%)

Reaction to radical information

Comment	6%
Share	7%
Analyze	16%
Read	43%
Delete	43%

Youth media preferences

Other	1,8%
Telegram	1,0%
Viber	1,2%
IMO	1,4%
Odnoklassniki	3,3%
Skype	4,6%
WhatsApp	96,3%

much fewer people who generate the texts themselves. Therefore, inaction of some respondents suggests that people are afraid to take initiative, write about their thoughts and attitudes, as well as about the attitude to current events.

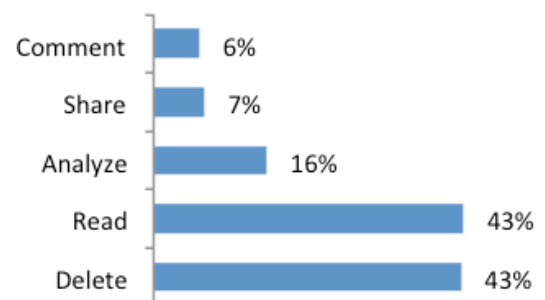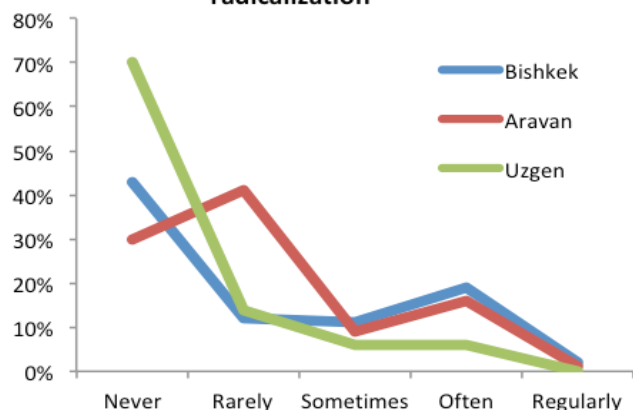Recruitment and features of radicalism depend on

or by name (25%). When seeing information of radical nature, the respondents read and then delete (43%); 16% analyze it and 7% noted that they share it.

However, there is a big difference between the regions: for example, information is more often read and analyzed in Bishkek, it is more often deleted in Aravan and it is more often shared in Uzgen. Our respondents noted that they either had not get information about counter-radicalism or had

Finding information on countering radicalization

seen it too rarely. Oftentimes such information is more available in Bishkek in comparison with other regions. This suggests that existing media strategies and practice aimed at preventing extremism are not effective enough.

Conclusions

The analysis of the data has shown that a unified media strategy for state bodies, non-governmental organizations and civic activists is necessary for safety of society. The conducted survey revealed that young people in the regions are not aware of the activities of state bodies in preventing and countering extremism.

In our opinion, the development or finalization of existing media strategies will allow to overcome a number of difficulties, in particular, ensuring national security by reducing the spread of the ideology of extremism via the Internet.

Having studied the foreign experience of the United States and the Russian Federation, in particular, the use of new tools and approaches to prevent the spread of the ideology of extremism on the Internet, and having compared the methods of state bodies and local NGOs, the research authors have

come to conclusion that innovations in the existing media strategies of Kyrgyzstan are urgently needed. This may be expressed in support of civic initiative and projects proposed by international donors and non-governmental organisations. The responses to the survey conducted among youth of Uzgen, Aravan and Bishkek showed that they get basic information from social networks and identify the content of extremist materials after familiarisation. An effective state communication strategy would give a positive effect by teaching young people to identify radicalism by one name only, familiarising them with the methods of countering them and teaching the correct reaction to extremist information.

Recommendations

To the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic:
- To improve and implement a unified media strategy with the emphasis on social media and instant messengers, that includes effective interaction between state bodies and agencies, non-governmental organisations, various religious denominations and civic activists.

To the Security Council:
- To amend the newly introduced Cybersecurity Strategy in Kyrgyzstan. Specifically, to include a training item for current employees or to attract new cybersecurity specialists to state bodies and religious denominations (SCRA, SBMK, ROC);

To ROC and Muftiyat:
- To support and actively interact with projects of international donors and NGOs on religious communications using information technology, social media and instant messengers;

To NGOs and Stakeholders:
- To participate and closely interact with state bodies, religious associations and mass media in activities to prevent and counter the ideology of violent extremism.

Are there any Difficulties in Interaction between Young People of Different Religious Beliefs in the Kyrgyz Republic?

Authors: Bakyt uulu Tynchtykbek, Aiperi Asylbekova
Mentor: Nurgul Esenamanova

Abstract

This document contains analysis of the interaction between young people of different religious beliefs in different regions of Kyrgyzstan. As part of the research, it was found that the interaction between young people of different confessions has both positive and negative trends. The research has revealed that young people of Protestant movements in most cases face discrimination at the household level, as well as conflict situations that arise during the burial of their co-religionists. Locations where these negative interrelations are most acutely manifested were identified. This policy brief contains information and description of young people's perception of other's different religious beliefs of each other. The policy brief in the form of recommendations provides ways out and solutions to these conflict situations for people who determine the political course of Kyrgyzstan.

Introduction

As practice of recent years shows, the steady growth of people practicing religion has been increasing. This trend is especially noticeable among the young generation of our country. At the same time, we are seeing an increase in hostility among young people to representatives of other confessions and religious beliefs.

Various facts of vandalism are often published in mass media and violence between young people on religious grounds is observed. Thus, for example, in October 16, 2018, a 25-year-old young man was beaten by three drunken men in Tamchy village, Issyk-Kul region, Kyrgyzstan1. This incident demonstrates a negative perception of certain religious beliefs by youth.

Based on mass media publications, it can be assumed that there is a trend for negative interaction and involvement of youth in conflict situations. Accordingly, there is a need for a content analysis of the main trends in negative interaction between young people of different religious beliefs.

Methodology

Three main methods were used as part of the research:

- In-depth interview with representatives of state bodies, religious leaders and youth;
- Expert survey;

1. Bermet Ulanova "The fate of the Kyrgyz proselytes: battered, reburied three times"; https://reporting.cabar.asia/ru/sudba-kyrgyzov-prozelitov-izbitye-perezahoronennye-trizhdy/) 23.10.2018. (last accessed on 04.04.2019)
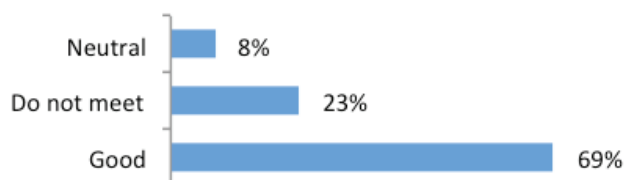
- Focus group discussion.

The research was conducted in administrative cities representing 7 regions of Kyrgyzstan which included Bishkek, Osh, Jalalabad, Batken, Talas, Naryn and Karakol.

Perception of Representatives with Different Religious Beliefs

In general, it was revealed that the perception of representatives of other religions by Muslims surveyed is "positive" in all areas. Thus, 69% of Muslims answered "positively", other 23% of Muslims noted that there are no representatives of other religions in the territory where they (Muslims) live. Such answers were especially often in mono-ethnic locations. The remaining 8% of Muslims responded that they were neutral about other religious beliefs.
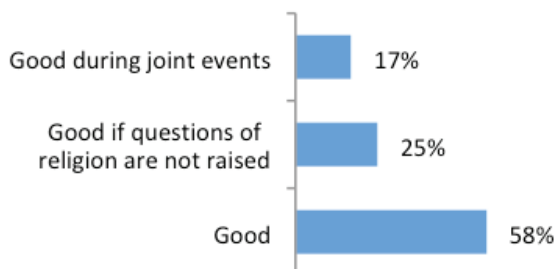
When asked about interaction with representatives of other religions, more than 70%

Perception of representatives of other faiths by Muslims

Neutral	8%
Do not meet	23%
Good	69%

of Protestants responded "good". The remaining 25% of the respondents have certain perceptual boundaries when interacting. They have good/positive relationship, if not to consider religious issues.
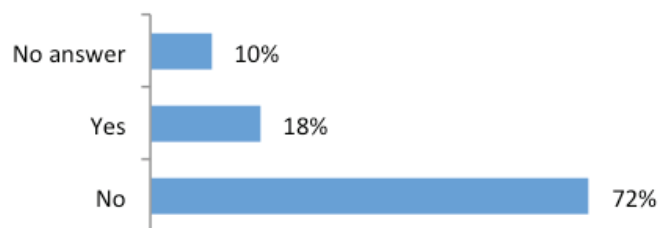
Perception of representatives of other faiths by Protestants

Good during joint events	17%
Good if questions of religion are not raised	25%
Good	58%

Interaction between Representatives of Different Religious Beliefs

When asked about conflict situations with representatives of other religions, the following results were obtained. Thus, from among the respondents interviewed, 72% answered that they had not got into conflict situations, and 18% noted that they had faced various kinds of conflict situations, such as infringement and threat to them. In addition, they mentioned such situations when they were not allowed to bury a deceased in a local cemetery. The remaining 10% ignored this question.
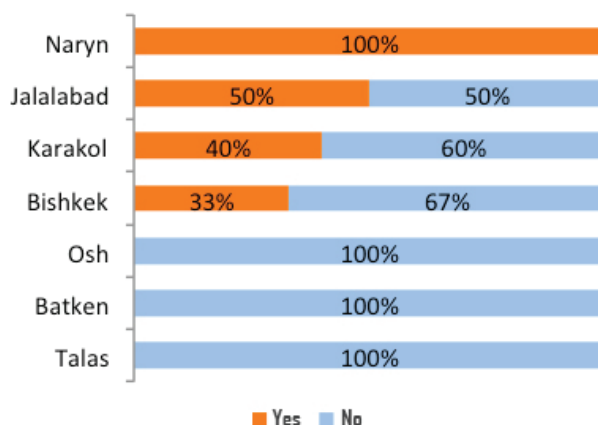
Conflicts with representatives of other faiths

No answer	10%
Yes	18%
No	72%

The data analysis has revealed that the respondents who answered positively about conflicts with other representatives of religion are adherents of the Protestant movement.

Due to the fact that mainly Protestants have conflicts, we decided to show the number of Protestants who got into conflict situations in different areas. As part of field work, it turned out that Protestants faced conflicts in the cities of Naryn, Jalal-Abad, Bishkek and Karakol. The nature of conflicts in these cities is the

Conflicts with representatives of other faiths

	Yes	No
Naryn	100%	
Jalalabad	50%	50%
Karakol	40%	60%
Bishkek	33%	67%
Osh		100%
Batken		100%
Talas		100%

same; in everyday life conflicts occurred at the beginning of adoption of a new religion in the cities of Jalal-Abad and Karakol. Relatives did not accept and alienated the respondents, but they got used to it and began to build relationships over time. However most often, conflicts with local residents and with local imams arise during the burial of adherents of this religion.

Based on the data obtained during interviews with Protestant respondents, it can be assumed that in the city of Naryn the local population behaves intolerantly to Protestants, compared to other cities. Conflicts more often arise both during burial and at the household level in the city of Naryn. This was noted by all the surveyed Protestants from Naryn, while the relationship between Muslims and other believers is relatively stable in the cities of Bishkek, Jalal-Abad and Karakol.

Conflicts most often occurred on the outskirts of cities and villages, where a mono-ethnic population predominates and a low level of interaction between different religions is traced. Conflicts did not arise in other parts of the city, where the population was more or less heterogeneous. As part of the research, we also found out that conflict situations are often provoked by drunken people, as well as by people who are not well informed about religion. When asked to identify people with whom they had conflicts, they noted "nominal (ethnic) Muslims". By "nominal Muslims" our respondents mean people who do not practice Islam but identify themselves with Muslim culture or religion due to family and ethnic origin.

The most tolerant city in relation to representatives of other religions was the city of Talas. Our research has revealed that there is a positive trend between representatives of different religious beliefs in this city. They have not had conflicts either in everyday life or in matters of burial, and there was no conflict with the administration of the region. Based on the answers of both respondents with different religious beliefs and representatives of state bodies, it turned out that the city is united and friendly. The unity of all religious institutions is expressed in solving common problems of the region or city, as well as each religious institution is united from the inside.

We have found out that there are no conflicts between local residents and Protestants in the cities of Karakol and Jalal-Abad, but on the outskirts of these regions, in villages, conflict situations arise from time to time, both in everyday life and in matters of burial.
All our respondents noted that they have no problems in the cities of Batken and Osh. Nevertheless, that is not to say that they have the same situation as in the city of Talas. Thus, it was difficult to find respondents who preach the Protestantism in the city of Batken. As a result, few respondents were interviewed. When asked about conflicts in the city of Jalal-Abad, all respondents referred to burial problems.

Religious Knowledge and Awareness as a Fundamental Factor in Interaction

As part of the research, we found out that 85% of Muslims get religious knowledge on their own through sources such as the Internet, taalims, religious books and others. In turn, Protestants as well as Muslims get information of religious nature on their own. Protestants get religious knowledge from the Bible, as well as attend Sunday sermons of local shepherds who got religious education in other countries or in theological seminaries.

Therefore, each religion in the country has its own sources of knowledge. Oftentimes the information they get is different. In our opinion, reliability and correctness of the information in some sources, such as the Internet or foreign religious institutions can be called into question. Thus, this issue needs a separate study to systematise the sources of religious information.

Recommendations
To the Ministry of Education

- Lack of knowledge and information about other religions is one of the causes of conflicts among the population. Conflicts often arise within local communities where residents are not sufficiently informed. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce courses on the history of religious culture in educational institutions (secondary schools and universities), which will contribute to the eradication of future conflict situations based on various religious beliefs.

To State Agency for Local Self-Government and Inter-Ethnic Relations and Local Self-Governments:

- In order to eradicate the causes of conflicts, it is necessary to consider the allocation or sale of land locally for the burial of people who practice Protestantism separately from the cemeteries of Muslims and Orthodox Christians.

- There is a high probability that conflict situations would arise in mono-ethnic local communities. Therefore, in order to reduce the trend of negative interaction between representatives of various religious beliefs, it is recommended to conduct preventive conversations with the local population.

To State Agency for Local Self-Government and Inter-Ethnic Relations and SCRA:

- One of the causes of conflicts is the lack of interaction between different groups of the population. Therefore, in order to prevent conflicts, constant monitoring by the SCRA and local authorities is needed to analyse the activities of some religious organisations, such as, for example, Jehovah's Witnesses, as to find out the causes of conflicts with the local population.
- The SCRA is strongly recommended to hold events not only with religious leaders, but also to involve representatives of religious and secular youth. It is also necessary to update the concept of "Kyrgyz Zharany", whereby ethnic groups affiliation, attitude to religion and other cultural characteristics of citizens should not be the basis for division of the people.
- It is especially needed to conduct active works in regions such as Jalal-Abad, Naryn, and Issyk-Kul, where mono-ethnic communities prevail, for the prevention of conflict situations on the basis of affiliation to various religious confessions.

The Role of Non-Profit Organizations in Promotion of Countering Terrorism and Extremism in the Kyrgyz Republic

Authors: Meerim Subanbekova, Erlan Nurlanov
Mentor: Iskender Bainazarov

Abstract

The research has shown that the potential and role of non-profit organisations, primarily at the local level, in promotion of countering terrorism and extremism in the Kyrgyz Republic is not adequately assessed. In practice, some NPOs are more active in the framework of projects at the republican level, in particular with regards to the improvement of legislation, document examination, public education and public awareness, and the prevention of terrorism and extremism. It is necessary to ensure coordination of state and municipal bodies, as well as NPOs on countering terrorism and extremism in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Introduction

The issues of terrorism and extremism are one of the most challenging in the modern world. No state is able to ensure safety of its citizens and guarantee the observance of human rights and freedoms without the solution to these issues. Today non-profit organisations of the Kyrgyz Republic play an important role in the process of regulating socio-political relations, improving the legal framework and state policy, solving socio-humanitarian problems, education in the law, economic development of municipalities and preventing conflicts.

The research purpose is to study the role of NPOs in the promotion of countering terrorism and extremism in Kyrgyzstan over the past five years.

Methodology

As part of the research, a telephone survey and focus group discussions in the cities of Bishkek and Osh were also used. Representatives of NPOs, state bodies and experts from the scientific community were involved in the research subjects. Participants in the focus group discussion were selected using the "snowball" method.

Countering terrorism and extremism is the activity of state authorities, local governments, organisations and enterprises regardless of their form of ownership. According to the legislation, NPOs shall be entitled to carry out activities in the areas of prevention and minimisation of the consequences of terrorism[1]. Some NPOs operate in the field of depoliticisation of Islam and countering terrorism and extremism as part of their mission. These include associations such as the Mutakalim Progressive Women's Public Association, which operates in the field of preventing radicalisation among the female community, or the Iyman Foundation for the Development of Spiritual Culture, which conducts activities in the field of civil society to develop spiritual and religious culture of the population,

as well as to counter religious extremism in Kyrgyzstan.

Besides local civil society organisations, the following international non-profit organisations actively implement their projects in Kyrgyzstan: Search for Common Ground, Internews, the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR). They carry out activities to counter terrorism and extremism by initiating and supporting socio-political, informational and other projects at the national and regional level.

Kyrgyzstan has sufficient potential acting through non-profit organisations, which are currently not used to the full extent. For example, there is a lack of serious attitude to specialised public associations that have legal basis for their activities. These include aqsaqal courts, Social Prevention Centers (SPCs), Voluntary Rescue Teams (VRTs), Voluntary People's Guards (VPGs) at the municipality level, Public Advisory Committees at the regional level (PACs) and others.

Practice shows that the threats of modern radicalism and terrorism can only be confronted by joint efforts of the state and civil society. In this regard, the need to actualise cooperation of authorised state bodies, NPOs and other stakeholders to counter radicalism and extremism as a threat to national, public and personal security is clearly traced.

Conclusions

As a result of the research, the following conclusions have been drawn.

•   Firstly, in the course of studying the role of the civilian sector in the field of countering terrorism and extremism, those non-profit organisations that directly work in this area were highlighted based on open sources. A large number of states, international and local non-profit organisations engaged in countering terrorism and extremism operate in Bishkek, but their number is limited in the regions (See Annex 1). In addition, as part of the analysis of literature sources, we came to the conclusion that there is a positive experience of cooperation between NPOs and partners. For example, a multi-agency plan to counter terrorism and extremism was developed in conjunction with the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Kyrgyzstan. Joint works to counter, prevent and suppress the ideology of Hizb Ut-Tahrir started to be carried out across the population at the local level[2].

•   Secondly, during the FGD and interviews, it turned out that the non-profit sector is not yet sufficiently represented in the infrastructure of countering terrorism and extremism in Kyrgyzstan. Wherein, it is worth noting that NPOs are more effective and efficient in their activities at the national level rather than organisations of the local level. This is explained by the fact that institutions at the national level are trying to implement their mission by way of influencing the improvement of the policy of state bodies, whereas civic institutions work at the level of community, working directly with the parties affected by conflict.

•   Thirdly, almost all civic peace building institutions have similar labor, financial and institutional problems and restrictions. First of all, this is a legal restriction of the status, activity, coordination and interaction in the system of countering terrorism and extremism, which significantly narrows the competency of these institutions.

At the same time, these institutions have achieved some recognition on the part of the population as more open and transparent or-

1. Article 1 of the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On Countering Terrorism", November 8, 2006 № 178

2. Mirsayitov I. Religious extremism on the example of the Nookat events of 2008, Almanac "Experience of the Kyrgyz Republic in crisis management: lessons for the future", ed. Alymbaeva and Nagareva, Geneva - Bishkek - Riga - Sofia, 2014. page 59

ganisations which, if the problem has not been resolved, try to convey them to the relevant authorities.

• Fourthly, authorised state and municipal institutions will in any case play a decisive role in pre-crisis and crisis situations. Hence, local NPOs should effectively secure their support functions for the prevention of terrorism and extremism and provide the authorities with timely and reliable information; in addition, suggestions of adequate strategies and tactics for the prevention for the detection and suppression of terrorist and extremist activities and minimising the consequences of terrorism.

Recommendations

In order to involve NPOs in identifying and eliminating the causes and conditions conducive to the emergence of terrorism and extremism, as well as to minimise the consequences of terrorist and extremist activities, it is hereby recommended:

To ATC GKNB
• To define the functions of countering terrorism and extremism in Kyrgyzstan for civil society and NPOs in the form of supplements into the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On Countering Terrorism" dated November 8, 2006 No. 178. Specifically, to determine their status, powers and spheres of influence on counteraction processes.

• To actively involve NPOs in the process of development of conceptual programs and strategies. The function of observer to detect and indicators of changes in the religious sphere and the sentiments of the risk group representatives should be assigned to NPOs as well.

• To create a territorial inter-departmental commission on countering terrorism and extremism with the participation of relevant NPOs at the local level.

• To the authorised state body responsible for countering terrorism and extremism - to maintain interconnection and interaction between state and municipal bodies, civil society institutions and stakeholders to help counter terrorism and extremism.

• To develop indicators of positive and negative changes in the religious sphere and the sentiments of believers, in the behavior of people of the risk group and those undergoing social rehabilitation.

To MES, State Agency for Local Self-Government and Inter-Ethnic Relations, LSG, SCRA, SBMK:
• To assist in the opening of (stationary and distance) courses under political science, theological, sociological and psychological departments of universities, as well as on the basis of training centers of specialised NPOs for retraining and advanced training of specialists of state bodies, local governments and non-profit organisations in order to work in the field of countering terrorism and extremism.

• To hold a bidding under the state order for groups of researchers and NPOs on the most relevant topics of countering terrorism and extremism so that interested specialists and relevant organisations could contribute to the study of existing problems and preparation of the necessary recommendations.

• To popularise the best foreign and local experience in the field of countering terrorism and extremism throughout Kyrgyzstan.

Appendix: The potential of NGOs to prevent and minimize the effects of extremism and terrorism

Currently, NGO work is fragmented (within the framework of projects) and it is more at the republican level addressing following tasks:

- participation in improving legislation;
- research and examination of documents;
- public education and awareness;
- work in the field of prevention.

At the local level, NGOs work using pilot projects and limiting themselves to trainings, public events and consultations.

More than 20 thousand different NGOs are registered today in Kyrgyzstan; among them are specialized public associations that have a legal basis for their activities - these are aksakal courts, public preventive centers, voluntary rescue teams, voluntary people's squads at the level of 484 municipalities, public advisory committees at the regional level and others. NGOs have the following potential in countering extremism and terrorism:

- contribute to the formation of a comprehensive social mechanism (including the coordinated joint activities of the authorized state body, municipalities, relevant state bodies, specialized NGOs and the business sector) in combating terrorism and extremism;
- conduct a public examination of regulatory legal acts, concepts and programs governing the issues of combating terrorism and extremism, as well as monitoring their implementation;
- participate in mentoring and social support of victims of violence and persons undergoing social rehabilitation in cooperation with representatives of social services and local specialists of authorized state bodies;
- work with risk groups, as they are primarily subjected to radicalization and politicization;
- support the raising of relevant qualifications for decision-makers, state and municipal employees, experts of non-profit organizations, teachers and clergy of educational and religious institutions, as well as activists of local communities;
- create and distribute media content on social networks and the Internet, which helps to counter radical views and values;
- actively involve the public (crowdsourcing) in measures to counter terrorism and extremism, as well as monitoring the information.

Ways and Causes of involving women in the activities of forbidden religious organizations in Kyrgyzstan

Author: Aibek Tilekmatov
Mentor: Mametbek Myrzabaev

Abstract

This research represents an attempt to study the ways and causes of involving Kyrgyzstani women in banned religious groups. A comprehensive analysis of the published domestic research on radicalisation among women in Kyrgyzstan over the past five years has been conducted in order to study this problem. The research is based on in-depth interviews with women who are registered with law enforcement bodies as members of radical groups. In addition, representatives of the SPS, officers of the Extremism and Illegal Migration Countering Service under the MIA and experts working in the religious sphere have been interviewed.

Introduction

According to the data provided by the Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, in 2017 the proportion of women in the total population was 50.4%.

As a result of the increased religious activity of the population, as evidenced by visiting missionaries, opening mosques, madrassas, religious charity foundations and religious centers, women are actively involved in the religious life of society along with men.

Some women in Kyrgyzstan fall into the ranks of banned religious movements and are actively involved in the destructive actions of extremist groups for various reasons. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 10 years ago the proportion of women in committing extremist crimes was 1.1%, and in 2016 this figure increased to 25%. From among 863 citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic who left for Syria to participate in hostilities on the side of ISIS for the period from 2010 to June 2016, 188 were women.

Existing researches aimed at studying the channels and causes of radicalisation have not fully paid attention to the role of women in this process. The specificity of the issue does not always allow researchers to study the topic in the necessary way. Not all agree to conduct research aimed at identifying the causes and ways of radicalisation among women due to methodological difficulties. As a result, now researchers do not have a clear picture of radicalisation process among women.

Methodology

Initially, the research object was women in the Correctional Labor Facility No. 2 of the SPS in the Stepnoye village of the Zhaiyl district, convicted under the extremism and terrorism rule. This institution is considered the only correctional facility for women in Kyrgyzstan. Due to the refusal of the SPS to our written appeal, which was being examined for 1.5 months, we had to change the research object to women registered with the MIA for participation in religious extremist organisations.

Three religious groups were chosen for the interview: Hizb Ut-Tahrir al-Islami, Yakin Inkar and supporters of radical Salafi groups.

The research was conducted in Osh, Jalal-Abad, Issyk-Kul, Naryn and Chui regions.

All women invited by us refused the request for an interview. Therefore, in order to conduct interviews with women, negotiations were initially conducted with men who were members of the same religious group or relatives of our respondents.

Ways of Radicalisation
As part of our research, the following ways of radicalisation among women were identified.

Kinship Relationship
Family ties often represent a channel for involving women in the activities of radical organisations. A family member often attracts other family members in a religious group after adopting the religious beliefs of radical groups. In most cases, this is initiated by males. However, there are cases when women initiate and spread the radical religious idea. In some cases, relatives can also serve as a barrier that protects women from radical movements.

Neighborship
Neighborship also affects the spread of radical ideas among women. This is especially the case in the south where representatives of one religious group often live in the neighborship and form close ties.

Homeschooling of Religion
Religious groups organise training for women in houses and apartments not only in the regions, but also in large cities. All religious groups are engaged in study of religious knowledge at home. Such non-qualified trainings are fraught with many pitfalls that carry different religious trends. Oftentimes team leaders task the participants of such kind of schooling to invite their relatives, friends, acquaintances.

Internet
Currently, the Internet is an integral part of society. Supporters of radical groups actively use existing Internet sites and services or create their own online communities to promote religious beliefs and recruit new supporters.

Leaflet Distribution
It is also practiced to distribute religious flyers into houses explaining religion, whereby the first sheet contains information about prayers, the reading of which will allow you to receive a reward, and the second sheet contains more purposeful information about the religious group.

Joint Presence in Correctional Facilities
In interview with the SPS officers, it was noted that women convicted of religious extremism, disseminate their religious beliefs to other convicted women who are interested in learning about religion.

At the moment, separate blocks for convicted extremists are built in men's correctional facilities. However, there are no such separate blocks in the female Correctional Facility No. 2 only, located in the Stepnoye village.

Causes of Radicalisation
According to the research findings, the following causes of radicalisation among women can be distinguished.

1. Poor Religious Literacy
Lack of knowledge in religion often explains why women fall under the influence of radical ideas.

2. Poor Legal Literacy
Some respondents perceive "secularism" in the state as a denial of religion. Thus, in our interview, when speaking about obstacles in following religious norms, one of the respondents compared the state system with a system of "Kafirs" (disbelievers).

3. Resentment and Protest Moods
The actions of law enforcement officers are of-

ten considered unreasonable and too harsh. Many respondents noted that God will eventually punish the officials who discriminated against them. For example, the Salafi group strengthens the feelings of its supporters by claiming that they are already avenged and that many of the officials who were persecuting them got removed from their posts or got into car accident. And representatives of Yakyn Inkar and Hizb Ut-Tahrir say that senior officials being in a detention center regret that they did not understand the essence of religion in a timely manner.

4. Lack of Trust towards Spiritual Board of Muslims of Kyrgyzstan
The respondents noted that state agencies do not pay enough attention to the appeals and problems of women.

5. Ignorance or Non-Judgmental Attitude due to Nationality or Kinship Lines
Sometimes when detaining members of a banned religious group, a mass of aggressively inclined people gather and shout curses at law enforcement bodies, although many of those present are not members of banned religious organisations. Sometimes, on the contrary, individual religious groups or the local community independently and strenuously persecute members of a banned religious group.

6. Politicisation of Religion
The respondents were well informed about matters of international relations. There is a sense that someone constantly and purposefully enlightens them. Thus, one representative of the Hizb Ut-Tahrir religious group, a housewife who married early and did not have a corresponding higher education in international law, could have easily discussed international relations and was constantly monitoring the movement of the head of state.

Conclusions
As part of the research, we identified the following ways of radicalisation among women:

neighborship, kinship, joint religious education, distribution of leaflets into houses, the Internet space and joint presence at correctional facilities.

We have also identified the following causes of radicalisation among women:

- Low religious literacy and misleading perception of religious dogma;

- Lack of awareness of their own rights and freedoms;

- Sense of injustice and discrimination;

- Distrust, and sometimes conflict with the existing state and political system;

- Silent, non-judgmental attitude to members of banned religious groups based on ethnic and kinship lines;

- Sometimes individual religious groups or the local community independently persecutes members of a banned religious group.

Recommendations
To the MIA:
- To consider prescription of the measures to prevent radicalism as the function of officers of the Extremism and Illegal Migration Countering Service (hereinafter referred to as the EIMCS) under the new Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic, since now all the actions of the criminal police are going through an investigative order. And the prevention is considered an abusive exercise of power. Works in this direction will be slowed down due to the heavy work load on investigators and lack of human resources. Therefore there is a certain risk of religious groups getting out of control.

- Do not transfer the EIMCS officers/resources to other departments (theft, cattle theft, etc.) within the MIA.

- To include female employees in the EIMCS staff to work with the female half of religious organisations.
- To appoint employees with the relevant experience to leading posts in village police departments where there are no EIMCS officers.

To the Ministry of Justice:
- To provide free legal assistance to the population in order to increase the credit of trust in state agencies. Herewith, attention should be paid to various statements of radical religious groups about the constitutional order and, accordingly, to develop not an official, but a public or neutral style that will be understandable to any citizen.

To the MIA, SCRA and SBMK:
- The MIA, SCRA and SBMK should develop clear programs for women on de-radicalisation separately for each banned religious organisation.

- To increase the number of employees in state bodies who work in this direction with the involvement of female employees.

- In addition, staff working directly with the prevention of radicalisation should be provided with high security measures and appropriate wages.

- The SBMK should actively carry out activities to increase religious literacy of the population, in order to prevent the spread of distorted religious dogmas and the ideology of religious extremism and terrorism. Particular attention should be paid to activities to work with women.

To the SPD of the KR, SPS, the General Staff of the KR and the Boarder Guard
- State agencies need to have a post for a theologian who will respond directly to the questions raised locally.

To the OTRK:
- To release radio and television programs which reveal the negative essence of the radical religious ideology for women. Introduction of documentary films and social videos.

Policy Brief

based on the results of the research work conducted within the framework of International Alert's project "Constructive Dialogues on Religion and Democracy" funded by the European Union.

The Degree of Intersectional Discrimination of Religious Girls and Women in Osh

Authors: Saparali Pataev, Sezim Saipova, Aziza Torokeldi kyzy
Mentor: Aikokul Maksutova

Abstract

- Despite the fact that the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic and the relevant industry regulatory acts prohibit any form of violation of human rights and forms of discrimination, there is no single approach to define the concept of discrimination, especially the term "multiple or intersectional discrimination" at the legislative level.

- It must be recognised that the problem of discrimination is relevant in Kyrgyz society in general, including its intersectional form (based on gender, language, various beliefs and social background), which is also found in relation to the research object - women and girls practicing Islam (hereinafter the WGPI).

- On the one hand, self-identification or self-determination of the WGPI noticeably impacts the degree of their integration into the public life of the city, on the other hand, society is trying to accept this as something natural and not to show a certain position - welcoming or opposing to this phenomenon.

- There are certain prerequisites and causes leading to discrimination and restriction of the rights and opportunities of the WGPI in public processes, including the decision-making process at the city level.

Introduction and Methodology

This research examines the problem of multiple discrimination in the context of the city of Osh in various aspects, which can generally be grouped into the following three main categories: (1) equal rights of the WGPI in society, (2) their access to various services, and (3) established opinions and public expectations regarding the WGPI and the relationship problems. Apart from that, information about respondents and brief description of the WGPI in the communities of the city of Osh are provided.

The research uses mixed research methods in order to obtain primary data from both qualitative and quantitative sources: a survey of 200 respondents, focus groups and expert interviews.
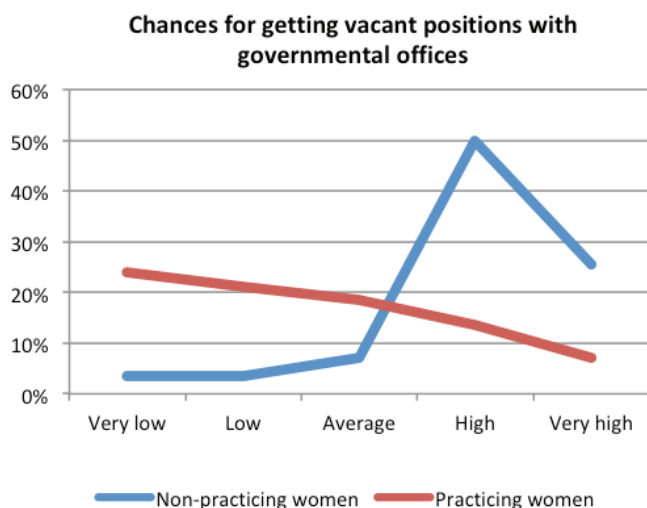
The authors use "QUANT+qual+qual" - an analytical-interpretative model, according to which the quantitative method is fundamental and the qualitative method is auxiliary, clarifying. Qualitative and quantitative data are collected and analysed separately, and then various results are compared and analysed during interpretations. Triangulation of the data was conducted by means of verification through researchers and various data sources. MAXQDA and SPSS computer programs were used when processing and analysing data. That allowed us to achieve a high degree of openness, transparency and quality of analytical work.

General Characteristics of Research Object

Based on the opinions of the respondents and a review of relevant literature and other sources, the WGPI in the city of Osh can be characterised as the part of society that are trying to be involved in social processes despite the fact that the positions of the WGPI themselves and their perception by the local population are strongly polarised. In general, the respondents agree that interest in religion has been growing in recent years, and there is a lot of families practicing Islam in the south of the country, including the city of Osh. One of the clear observations is the changing appearance of women and girls towards wearing a hijab, and in some cases a niqab.
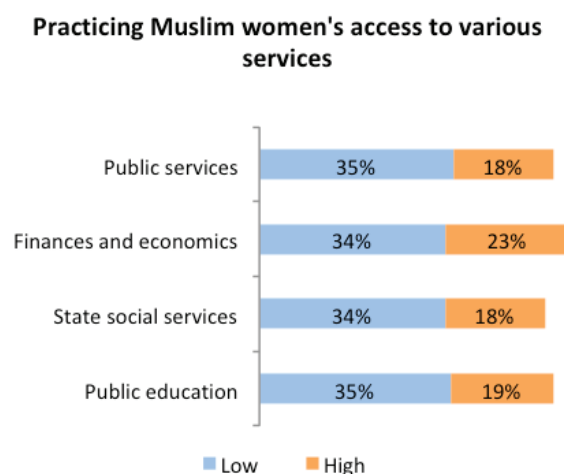
Equality Issues

43.5% of the surveyed are inclined to believe that, for some reason, the WGPI cannot fully use their rights in various spheres of life; 28% admit such a phenomenon; some reject such a state of affairs, and some not respond. In addition, the level of involvement of the WGPI in various areas of the decision-making process at the city level is lower than that of women and girls who are not practicing Islam. For example, in the opportunity of participating in filling vacant positions in state bodies. Many respondents noted that one of the reasons for this is the fact that being a religious woman and at the same time being active in public affairs is perceived by most of the WGPI as contrary to religious traditions, according to which, as they believe, women should first take care of their own home (as housewives).

Chances for getting vacant positions with governmental offices

Access to Various Public Services

The respondents were asked the following question in the process of the survey: "How would you evaluate the access of women and girls practicing Islam to the services of various organisations and institutions?" To assess the accessibility of various services, only "high" and "low" ratings are used in the following diagram, which can clearly show the opinions of the respondents. In general, the present pattern is encouraging: nevertheless, the majority believes that the main areas of service provision are quite accessible to the WGPI. At the same time, as we see the proportion of participants noted that the access issue cannot be denied, and certain internal rules and relations of employees make the above services almost inaccessible to the WGPI.

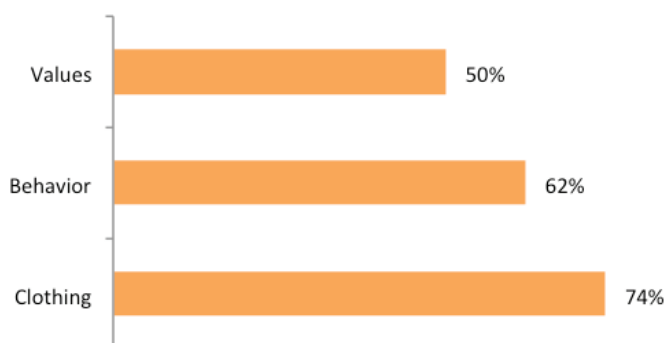Practicing Muslim women's access to various services

Established Opinions and Public Expectations Regarding the WGPI and Relationship Issues

According to the WGPI themselves, various stereotypes and prejudices stigmatise them in a negative way. For example, many consider such external characteristics as a beard and clothes to be signs of radical and extreme religious views. People with nationalistic sentiments criticise traditional Islamic clothing as something alien from Arab countries. Along with this, there are very interesting stereotypes that the WGPI, especially young girls, actually pretend to be religious and thus they are trying to get married. The diversity of points of view regarding stereotypes makes us wonder under what circumstances such prejudices were formed and how much they are a prod-

uct of subjective opinion of people.

The respondents were asked the following question: "What is the first view / opinion of people regarding girls / women practicing Islam based on?" Most of the answers say that the external feature still plays a decisive role. Another visual element - behavior, takes the second place among the respondents. Only a small part of
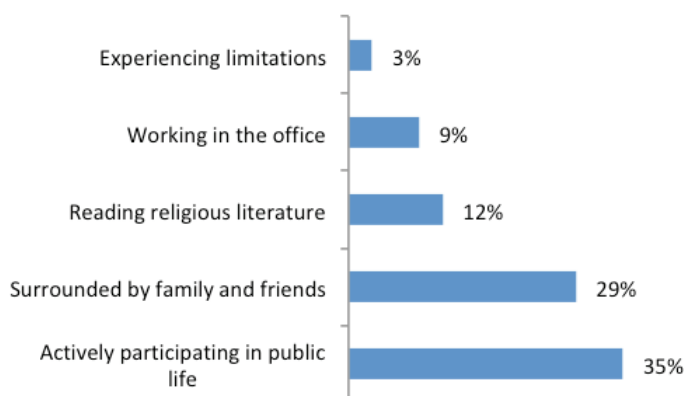
What people base their first impression on in regards to practicing Muslim women

Values	50%
Behavior	62%
Clothing	74%

respondents answered that they form their attitude to WGPI only after they learn about their views and life values.

The respondents believe that the WGPI will play an equally active role in the public life of the city of Osh in the foreseeable future. At the same time, as truly religious people, they will start

How practicing Muslim women and girls see their future

Experiencing limitations	3%
Working in the office	9%
Reading religious literature	12%
Surrounded by family and friends	29%
Actively participating in public life	35%

families and spend time surrounded by loved ones, and cases of restriction and discrimination on the basis of religious affiliation will decrease.

Conclusions

In general, the research has shown that the problem of discrimination against the WGPI in the city of Osh is important for its residents. Today, the issues related to the situation of the WGPI, not only in Osh, but also in Kyrgyzstan in general, require an adequate and fair study in order to prevent the root causes of restriction of rights and discrimination, which are key challenges for the present and future of the Kyrgyz Republic. The proper maintenance of the rule of law and the freedom of citizens in the country depend on how quickly and at the same time gently they will be warned. Thus, the following issues are most acute:

•	How will stakeholders find common and harmonised approaches to preventing cases of discrimination against the WGPI? For example, for the time being, different groups of the population have fundamentally different positions on many controversial issues of religiousness and secularism. Any attempt to push one-sided interest can lead to the destruction of trust.

•	Against the background of general trends related to Islam in the world, the image of the believer significantly enhances the negative sentiments among the population and SBs in relation to those practicing religion. In this regard, it is not yet known how does the population see the image of the WGPI, and what roles are attributed to them in public processes?

•	Against the background of general socio-economic and political shocks, people are looking for new meanings in life. Many find this in the ideologies of religious organisations and leaders, whose influence is growing rapidly among the population, including the WGPI. Most likely, there are state mechanisms to maintain a balance between secularism and religiousness, but we must admit that they cannot boast of effectiveness, it is not clear what alternatives can be proposed to remove the issue of ensuring equal rights and equal relations between the WGPI and other representatives of society.

Recommendations

To the Relevant State Agencies - the JK of the KR, the SCRA of the KR, SBs, LSGs, Local Keneshes

- To consider fixing and defining the terms "discrimination" and "multiple / intersectional discrimination" at the legislative level, in order to accurately explain related problems and issues.

- To review internal rules and regulations of state bodiesupon establishing relations with candidates for the open positions regarding their respect for human rights.

- To pay more attention to increasing the capacity and awareness of citizens about religion in the action plans in the related areas of activity.

- To think over and consider the mechanisms of involvement of the WGPI in the decision-making process at the city level (participation in sessions, budget hearings, etc.).

- A special emphasis in law enforcement activities should be placed on preventive measures - analysis of the root causes and consequences of problems of inequality and violation of rights in order to effectively work out the priority directions.

To Civil Society and International Organisations

- To continue monitoring activities to detect cases of discrimination and bring information to the attention of interested parties, including state bodies.

- To conduct research and design work given the conflict potential and using a gender-sensitive approach, while focusing on the interrelationship of the context with ongoing activities.

- To develop alternative initiatives to integrate the WGPI in social processes and events, for example, information campaigns and advocacy meetings with decision makers.

- To raise awareness of peaceful coexistence between representatives of different religions and ethnic groups in order to promote ideas of diversity.