



Concern in Kazakhstan over Returning Foreign Fighters from Syria

OE Watch Commentary: A Russian-language article on 6 March from the Kazakhstan-focused Russian-language news website *Tengri News* presented new statistics on the number of foreign fighters from Kazakhstan who have returned to the country from Syria. According to the new statistics, 125 Kazakhs have returned from Syria and 57 of them have been convicted on terrorism charges. The deputy chairman of the National Security Committee of Kazakhstan was quoted in the article as saying that since the defeat of international terrorist organizations in Syria, presumably referring to the al-Qaeda-loyal groups and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), there has been an exodus of fighters to other regions, including Central Asia.

One of the concerns expressed by the deputy chairman is that most of the returnees still adhered to their radical views. Kazakhstan is therefore developing rehabilitation programs for the returnees who have not been convicted. Without these programs, the article notes that the returnees may otherwise contribute to the broader radicalization of Kazakh society. The deputy chairman believes that Kazakhstan needs to improve its national programming to counter terrorism and religious extremism. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“International terrorist organizations were defeated in Syria and Iraq and as a result there have been outflows of militants and their families to other regions.”

Source: “57 вернувшихся из Сирии казахстанцев осуждены – КНБ (57 Kazakhstani returnees from Syria sentenced – KNB),” *Tengri News*, 6 March 2018. https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/57-vernuvshih-sya-iz-sirii-kazahstantsev-osujdenyi-knb-339290/

125 citizens returned from Kazakhstan to Syria, 57 of whom were convicted. This was reported by the deputy chairman of the National Security Committee of Kazakhstan Nurgali Bilisbekov. “As you know, international terrorist organizations were defeated in Syria and Iraq and as a result there have been outflows of militants and their families to other regions.” According to him, the returnees mostly continue to adhere to radical views. These and other factors emphasize the need to further improve the national program for countering terrorism and religious extremism,” he added.



Manjali mosque atyrau.

Source: By Redtryfan77 (Own work), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Manjali_mosque_atyrau.JPG, (CC-by-2.0).