

8 September 2021

KAZAKHSTAN: Fines, bans for offering religious materials for sale

By Felix Corley, Forum 18

So far in 2021, courts have fined 26 people and given 2 verbal reprimands for offering for sale religious literature or other religious objects, such as icons, vinyl records and Koran stands, without state permission. Almost all the fines were of three weeks' average wage. Oskemen Police "Struggle with Extremism and Terrorism Department" identified two people offering icons for sale online, who were both fined. No official would explain why this police department was concerned about icons. Nurgali Kabylov, Head of the Expertise [Censorship] Department of the Information and Social Development Ministry's Religious Affairs Committee, refused to explain why the state imposes compulsory prior censorship on all religious literature and items in defiance of its international human rights commitments.

Courts across Kazakhstan have fined at least 26 people so far in 2021 for offering for sale religious literature or other religious objects, such as icons, vinyl records and Koran stands, without state permission. Almost all the fines were of three weeks' average wage for those in formal work. Courts gave two other people verbal reprimands.

A May court decision in Aktau also ordered that four Islamic books seized from an individual seller be confiscated. State "expert" analyses (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2409) used in some cases to impose fines found that copies of the Koran and books about the Bible were religious books. Similarly, one person was fined for selling a Children's Bible which the Religious Affairs Committee stated was not banned (see below).

Of the 28 known administrative cases between January and August 2021, courts punished 15 people for offering religious books and objects for sale face to face, such as in shops, kiosks or at market stalls. Three people were fined in April for offering Islamic literature near Aisha Bibi Mausoleum in the southern Zhambyl Region. Courts in the other 13 known cases punished people for offering religious books and items for sale online (almost all on the Olx.kz website).

For a full list of the 28 known administrative cases between January and August 2021 for offering religious literature and items for sale, see below.

Nurgali Kabylov, Head of the Expertise [Censorship] Department of the Information and Social Development Ministry's Religious Affairs Committee, refused to explain why the state imposes compulsory prior censorship on all religious literature and items in defiance of its international human rights commitments (see below).

The regime is preparing several sets of legal amendments that may affect the way state religious censorship is imposed and what will be subject to punishment. Secrecy surrounds the current status of the amendments (see below).

The 28 known Administrative Code (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2409) cases between January and August 2021 to punish people for offering religious literature for sale were among 90 known administrative cases to punish the exercise of freedom of religion or belief. The other known cases were:

- Punishing meetings, rituals held without state permission – 20 cases (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2685);
- Punishing offering free religious materials without state permission – 2 cases;
- Punishing posting religious materials online without state permission – 22 cases;
- Punishing sharing faith without state permission - 2 cases;
- Punishing violating mosques' internal rules – 8 cases;
- Punishing religious teaching without state permission – 7 cases;
- Punishing trying to import religious literature without state permission - 1 case.

Among those punished for religious teaching without state permission was a Muslim, Kelir Nusyrov. On 12 July, Kordai District Court in Zhambyl Region fined him 100 Monthly Financial Indicators (MFIs), about 7 weeks' average local wage, for teaching Islam and the Koran to local children in his home. He is the third Muslim from the Dungan ethnic minority (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2652) known to have been fined for religious teaching so far in 2021 and the eleventh since August 2018.

Frequent punishments

Courts have repeatedly heard administrative cases in recent years to punish offering religious materials for sale without state permission. In the whole of 2020, courts prosecuted 26 (25 individuals and 1 company) (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2634) for offering religious literature, icons or other items for sale without state permission (30 in 2019, 34 in 2018, 58 in 2017). In the whole of 2020, courts prosecuted 29 individuals (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2634) for offering religious items for sale online without state permission (24 in 2019, 18 in 2018, 10 in 2017).

In no case so far in 2021 is a court known to have ordered seized religious literature be destroyed. In the whole of 2020, courts ordered religious literature destroyed (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2634) in 3 cases (6 cases in 2019).

One person in 2021 so far - Kyrgyz citizen Dastan Kulashev - is known to have been punished for importing religious literature or objects without state permission (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2650). In the whole of 2020, 1 individual was prosecuted for trying to import religious literature without state permission (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2634) (4 in 2019, 0 in 2018, 4 in 2017).

Fined for offering religious literature and objects for sale

All 15 of those known to have been prosecuted between January and August 2021 for offering religious literature and materials for sale in shops, kiosks and at market stalls were punished. Each was fined 35 Monthly Financial Indicators, about three weeks' average wage for those in work. Of the 15, 12 were also handed three-month bans on selling or distributing religious materials, or a vaguer three-month ban on unspecified activity.

On 14 February, officials found three people offering Islamic literature for sale in kiosks outside Aisha Bibi Mausoleum in the village of Aisha Bibi in the southern Zhambyl Region.

At separate court hearings in late April, Zhambyl District Court fined Kopbolsyn Kosybayev, Nurlan Zhadravev and Zhumagul Turtayeva each 35 Monthly Financial Indicators, about three weeks' average wage for those in work. The court also banned each from unspecified activities for three months.

Erkebulan Akbai, Head of the Islamic Department at Zhambyl Regional Religious Affairs Department, defended the prosecutions and punishments. "If you sell Islamic books without permission it is a violation of the law," he told Forum 18 from Taraz on 8 September. "The law requires registration to sell religious books."

Asked why anyone should be punished for offering religious books for sale, Akbai responded: "All such questions should be put to the Religious Affairs Committee in the capital. We just do our job."

Akbai told Forum 18 that the prosecutions of Kosybayev, Zhadravev and Turtayeva were the only ones in Zhambyl Region in 2021 so far.

Fined for offering religious literature and objects for sale online

Of the 13 individuals prosecuted between January and August 2021 for offering religious literature and objects for sale online, 11 were fined and 2 were given verbal warnings. Almost all had offered such items on online shopping site Olx.kz.

"Placing of private announcements on Olx.kz is not included among places specially determined by local authorities [where selling religious materials is allowed]," states the 12 April decision by Petropavl Specialised Administrative Court (seen by Forum 18) to punish Vladimir Savvichev for offering for sale vinyl Bible records. Other court decisions often include similar wording.

Among the items Olx.kz lists on the help section of its website as being illegal to sell are "Religious literature and other informational materials of religious content, and objects of religious significance". The website appears to have added this information in late 2020 (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2558), after a number of prosecutions that year.

Officers from the East Kazakhstan Region's Police "Struggle with Extremism and Terrorism Department" often identifies individuals offering to sell religious materials online. In two cases just days apart in late March in Oskemen, police "Struggle with

Extremism and Terrorism Department" officers sent information about Aleksandr Novikov and Olga Belokrys to the local police. Each had offered for sale an icon of the Mother of God for 15,000 Tenge, according to the decisions seen by Forum 18.

Forum 18 was unable to find out why offering icons for sale online is an issue for a police "Struggle with Extremism and Terrorism Department". The officer who answered the phone at the Regional Department in Oskemen told Forum 18 on 8 September that the Department Head Dzhambulat Abdurakhmanov was out of the office and no one else could respond immediately. The official promised to respond in writing. Forum 18 had received no written response by the end of the working day of 8 September.

In both Oskemen cases, police seized the icons and sent them to the Regional Religious Affairs Department for state "expert" analysis (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2409). This found that they were both religious pictures. The cases were then sent to court and Novikov and Belokrys were in June each fined 102,095 Tenge (35 Monthly Financial Indicators, about three weeks' average wage for those in work).

Present in court at both hearings and supporting the prosecution was D. Turganbayev of the City Akimat (Administration) Internal Policy Department. Telephones at the Department went unanswered each time Forum 18 called on 8 September.

Neither Novikov nor Belokrys is recorded as having been represented by a lawyer. So although they did not have lawyers' costs, they were each fined nearly seven times the amount they were hoping to gain by selling the icons. Novikov told the court that he had inherited the icon from his grandmother and had offered it for sale because he needed the money.

In the case of Sergei Ogonkov, police in Petropavl detained him on 19 April as he went to meet what he thought would be the person interested in buying his old Children's Bible for 3,500 Tenge. The police report of his detention and seizure of the Bible was prepared by officer Serik Shungulchin. A subsequent state "expert" analysis (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2409) noted of the Bible edition: "There is no obstacle to its use and distribution on the territory of Kazakhstan."

Petropavl Specialised Administrative Court fined Ogonkov three weeks' average wages on 13 July. His fine was 29 times the amount of money he was hoping to gain by selling the Children's Bible.

Shungulchin's colleagues at Petropavl Police refused to give Forum 18 his phone number on 8 September.

Warned without trial

Forum 18 has also learnt of one case where state religious affairs officials intervened to stop a religious book being sold online without the apparent involvement of the courts. Officials from the Religious Affairs Department of Almaty Akimat (Administration) visited the home of a local family in early 2021 to warn them when they offered for sale on Olx.kz a German-language book of the Psalms, published in 1905. The officials demanded that they remove the sales listing.

"They said that it is not allowed to sell such items as they have not undergone expert analysis for extremism," an individual close to the case noted. The sellers opened the book and pointed to the Tsarist-era censorship approval for publishing the book, granted in 1903. They also questioned the officials as to whether the Religious Affairs Department had people qualified to assess a book in German but received no response. It does not appear that an administrative case was launched and the sellers do not appear to have been punished.

Why state religious censorship?

The regime imposes tight restrictions on religious literature and other materials (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2409). Religious literature is subject to compulsory pre-publication censorship and – together with icons, pictures and jewellery with religious inscriptions - can be distributed only in state-approved venues. Imports of religious literature without state permission (apart from one copy of any one item for personal use) are illegal and also subject to prosecution.

Article 9, Part 2 of the Religion Law (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2409) states: "Distribution of religious literature, other informational materials of religious content and objects of religious designation is allowed only in [registered] places of worship, [registered] religious educational organisations as well as in fixed premises specially designated by the local executive authorities."

Religion Law Article 9, Part 3 allows for the import of religious literature by registered religious organisations only and only after it has undergone state censorship by the Religious Affairs Committee (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2409) (part of the Information and Social Development Ministry). Individuals can bring in only one copy of any religious book for personal use only.

On 26 March 2021, the United Nations Human Rights Committee communicated to Kazakhstan and made public its findings ([CCPR/C/130/D/2661/2015](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2683))

(https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CCPR%2fC%2f130%2fD%2f2661%2f2015&Lang=en), adopted on 30 October 2020) that Kazakhstan violated the rights of Jehovah's Witness Polat Bekzhan – chair of the Jehovah's Witness organisation in the country - by refusing permission for the community to import ten religious publications in 2012.

The UN Committee observed (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2650) that the censorship requirements set out in the Religion Law which could lead to such literature import bans "is also problematic in light of [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights] Article 19, which guarantees 'freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers'."

The UN Committee concluded by instructing Kazakhstan to remove the restrictions on importing the ten publications, give adequate compensation to Bekzhan and his colleagues, and "review its legislation, regulations and practices" to ensure that such a violation cannot recur.

Nurgali Kabylov, Head of the Expertise [Censorship] Department of the Religious Affairs Committee, refused to explain why the state imposes compulsory prior censorship on all religious literature and items in defiance of its international human rights commitments. "I can't answer by phone," he told Forum 18 from Nur Sultan on 8 September. "Send your questions in writing."

Asked why so many people are fined for offering religious literature and items for sale, Kabylov responded: "It's not we that impose fines."

Will legal changes increase, decrease or leave unchanged state religious censorship and punishments?

The regime is preparing several sets of legal amendments (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2680) that may affect the way the state's religious censorship is imposed and what will be subject to punishment.

The Information and Social Development Ministry proposed a new Law on Social Control (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2680) which would amend a range of other laws, including the Religion Law. The draft Law was published for public consultation on the government's draft Law website on 15 January. Forum 18 has seen the text of the draft Religion Law amendments from late July.

The draft amendments (in their July version) would widen the scope of religious material subject to prior compulsory state censorship. They include an addition to Article 1 of the Religion Law to define "informational material of religious content" as "printed, electronic and other information of religious character on any device, including textual links".

However, several sources told Forum 18 that on 29 June the Prime Minister's Office sent the draft Law for revision, apparently ordering that the provisions amending the Religion Law be removed.

The Information and Social Development Ministry also prepared separate amendments to the Religion Law (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2680). These have not been made public. Forum 18 has seen a draft text from late July.

An amendment in the July draft to Religion Law Articles 1 and 6 would remove the requirement for religious objects (such as icons, prayer mats, Koran stands, religious pictures or jewellery) to need approval before they can be sold or distributed. Article 5 would be amended to remove the requirement for local administrations to approve where religious objects can be sold or distributed.

Another amendment to Article 6 would also remove the requirement for religious literature published by state-registered religious organisations to undergo state censorship before it could be published, distributed or imported. However, anyone else producing written religious materials would have to submit them for prior compulsory state censorship.

These two Religion Law changes – if adopted - would represent "a slight liberalisation", one legal expert told Forum 18 from Almaty (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2680) on 19 August.

The Information and Social Development Ministry also prepared amendments to Article 490 of the Administrative Code (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2680), which punishes "Violating the Religion Law". Forum 18 has seen a draft text from late July.

Under the July draft, punishments would be reduced for individuals exercising freedom of religion or belief, including by offering religious literature, icons or other items for sale without state permission, offering religious items for sale online without state permission, offering religious materials to others for free without state permission, or trying to import religious literature without state permission. Currently individuals face fines of 50 Monthly Financial Indicators, about 1 month's average wage for those in formal work. This would be halved to 25 MFIs, with the new possibility of an official warning instead.

However, it remains unclear how far these three proposed sets of amendments have got. Yerzhan Nukezhanov, Head of the Religious Affairs Committee, spoke about the proposed Religion Law amendments at a 7 September government briefing, but did not specify which specific amendments he was talking about or give a timescale for adoption.

An official who answered the phone of the Religious Affairs Committee Legal Department on 8 September told Forum 18 that neither its Head, Beimbet Manetov, nor chief expert Mirgul Kalabayeva was in the office. The official said no one else could give any information about the proposed amendments.

Punishing offering religious literature, items for sale, without state permission

Known administrative cases: 15

Known convictions: 15

35 MFI fines (3 weeks' average wages): 15 fines

3-month bans on unspecified activity: 12 bans

Administrative Code Article 490 (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2409), Part 1, Point 3 punishes: "Violating the requirements of the Religion Law for .. import, manufacturing, production, publication and/or distribution of religious literature and other religious materials, and items for religious use". The punishment for individuals is a fine of 50 MFIs, and for legal entities 200 MFIs.

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 3 punishes: "Carrying out missionary activity without state registration (or re-registration), as well as the use by missionaries of religious literature, information materials with religious content or religious items without a positive assessment from a religious studies expert analysis (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2409), and spreading the teachings of a religious group which is not registered in Kazakhstan". The punishment is a fine of 100 MFIs, with deportation if the individual is a foreign citizen.

The list below gives the date of initial decision by lower court, name of defendant, belief, court issuing decision, Administrative Code article, reason for prosecution, and outcome.

1) 2 February 2021, Kumiya Dadanova, commercial seller

Turkistan Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 3, without state permission offering religious books for sale in shop

35 MFI fine plus 3-month ban on unspecified activity

2) 17 March 2021

Maksat Dzhamiyev, commercial seller

Zhanaozen Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 3, without state permission offering religious book for sale in shop

35 MFI fine plus 3-month ban on unspecified activity

3) 26 March 2021

Darya Porokhnya, commercial seller

Pavlodar Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 3, without state permission offering one copy of the Koran for sale in shop

(State "expert" analysis deemed it to be religious "with instructions on making the Muslim pilgrimage")

35 MFI fine

4) 22 April 2021

Kopbolsyn Kosybayev, commercial seller

Zhambyl District Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 3, without state permission offering Islamic books for sale in kiosk near mausoleum

35 MFI fine plus 3-month ban on unspecified activity

5) 22 April 2021

Nurlan Zhadrayev, commercial seller

Zhambyl District Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 3, without state permission offering 20 Islamic books for sale in kiosk near mausoleum

35 MFI fine plus 3-month ban on distributing religious materials

6) 26 April 2021

Zhumagul Turtayeva, commercial seller

Zhambyl District Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 3, without state permission offering Islamic books for sale in kiosk near mausoleum

35 MFI fine plus 3-month ban on unspecified activity

7) 26 May 2021

Temirlan Mursalim, commercial seller

Aktau Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 3, without state permission offering Islamic books for sale on street on the evening of the end of Ramadan

35 MFI fine plus confiscation of 4 books seized from him

8) 27 May 2021

Ardakhgul Murzat, commercial seller

Temirtau Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 3, without state permission offering religious books for sale in shopping centre kiosk

35 MFI fine

9) 31 May 2021

Baurzhan Shindauletov, commercial seller

Taldykorgan Inter-District Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 3, without state permission offering religious books for sale in shop

35 MFI fine plus 3-month ban on unspecified activity

10) 15 June 2021

Al-Mukhammed Makhmut, commercial seller

Aktau Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 3, without state permission offering religious book for sale in shop

35 MFI fine plus 3-month ban on unspecified activity

11) 21 June 2021

Asiya Zhumasheva, commercial seller

Taraz Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 3, without state permission offering religious items including books and Koran stands for sale in shop

50 MFI fine (reduced on appeal to 35 MFI fine, but 3-month ban on selling religious materials added at appeal)

12) 13 July 2021

Dastan Tulebayev, commercial seller

Almaty Inter-District Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 3, without state permission offering Islamic books and materials for sale in shop called "Muslim Shop"

140 MFI fine (reduced to 35 MFI fine on appeal) plus 3-month ban on selling religious literature

13) 29 July 2021

Nurlan Kazhemanov, commercial seller

Taldykorgan Inter-District Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 3, without state permission offering Islamic books for sale in kiosk near mosque (said had verbal permission from imam)

35 MFI fine plus 3-month ban on unspecified activity

14) 24 August 2021

Rysgul Agiyan, commercial seller

Taldykorgan Inter-District Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 3, without state permission offering Muslim books for sale in shop

35 MFI fine plus 3-month ban on unspecified activity

15) 25 August 2021

Aidana Ismagulova, commercial seller

Taldykorgan Inter-District Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 3, without state permission offering religious books for sale in shop (identified by the police "Struggle with Extremism and Terrorism Department")

35 MFI fine plus 3-month ban on unspecified activity

Punishing offering religious literature, items for sale online

Known administrative cases: 13

Known convictions: 13

50 MFI fines (1 month's average wage): 2 fines

35 MFI fines (3 weeks' average wages): 9 fines

Verbal reprimands: 2 reprimands

3-month bans on unspecified activity: 5 bans

Administrative Code Article 490 (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2409), Part 1, Point 3 punishes: "Violating the requirements of the Religion Law for .. import, manufacturing, production, publication and/or distribution of religious literature and other religious materials, and items for religious use". The punishment for individuals is a fine of 50 MFIs, and for legal entities 200 MFIs.

The list below gives the date of initial decision by lower court, name of defendant, belief, court issuing decision, Administrative Code article, reason for prosecution, and outcome.

1) 5 January 2021

Boris Levchenko, seller

Oskemen Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 3, without state permission offering one metal cross for sale online

35 MFI fine plus 3-month ban on unspecified activity

2) 6 January 2021

Askhat Kenesbayev, seller

Ekibastuz Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 3, without state permission offering one Koran inherited from mother for sale online

(State "expert" analysis (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2409) found the Koran was religious and belonged to the Muslim faith)

35 MFI fine

3) 14 January 2021

Alyona Aidina, seller

Pavlodar Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 3, without state permission offering one Koran for sale online

35 MFI fine

4) 12 February 2021

Vladimir Kolominsky, seller

Petropavl Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 3, without state permission offering one Koran for sale online

35 MFI fine

5) 6 April 2021

Kuatbek Suraganov, seller

Petropavl Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 3, without state permission offering book and electronic tutor on how to pray the namaz for sale online

35 MFI fine plus 3-month ban on distributing religious materials

6) 12 April 2021

Vladimir Savvichev, seller

Petropavl Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 3, without state permission offering 9 "The Bible for the Very Young" vinyl records for sale online,

50 MFI fine plus 3-month ban on unspecified activity

7) 4 May 2021

Veronika Bezborodova, seller

Petropavl Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 3, without state permission offering two Bible books for sale online

(State "expert" analysis (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2409) found that the Bible books were religious)

50 MFI fine (reduced to 35 MFI fine on appeal) plus 3-month ban on unspecified activity

8) 20 May 2021

Sabira Bakitova, seller

Nur-Sultan Inter-District Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 3, without state permission offering one book on Orthodox icons for sale online
Verbal reprimand

9) 20 May 2021

Anna Yakushonok, seller

Nur-Sultan Inter-District Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 3, without state permission offering one book "An Orthodox church" for sale online

Verbal reprimand

10) 7 June 2021

Aleksandr Novikov, seller

Oskemen Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 3, without state permission offering one icon of the Mother of God inherited from grandmother for sale online (discovered by the police "Struggle with Extremism and Terrorism Department")

35 MFI fine

11) 24 June 2021

Anar Kuanyshova, seller,

Aktobe Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 3, without state permission offering two Muslim books (one of them an e-book) for sale online

50 MFI fine plus 3-month ban on unspecified activity

12) 25 June 2021

Olga Belokrys, seller

Oskemen Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 3, without state permission offering one icon of the Mother of God for sale online (discovered by the police "Struggle with Extremism and Terrorism Department")

35 MFI fine

13) 13 July 2021

Sergei Ogonkov, seller

Petropavl Specialised Administrative Court

Administrative Code Article 490, Part 1, Point 3, without state permission offering one Children's Bible for sale online

(State "expert" analysis (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2409) found its distribution in Kazakhstan was not banned)

35 MFI fine

(END)

Full reports on freedom of thought, conscience and belief in Kazakhstan (<https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?query=&religion=all&country=29>)

For more background, see Forum 18's Kazakhstan religious freedom survey (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2409)

Forum 18's compilation of Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) freedom of religion or belief commitments (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=1351)

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