

## Press Release

Kazakhstani citizens with the independence gained an opportunity to freely satisfy their spiritual needs but still remain biased towards the new religious trends.

Civil society representatives have discussed the topics of tolerance and freedom of religions at the annual meeting of OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in Warsaw.

Mr. Kanagat Nurmukhambetov, Head of the Civil Society Association “Center for Human Rights Research “Akzhayik”” from the city of Uralsk, the Republic of Kazakhstan, gave a speech and concluded that Kazakhstan has all the conditions for satisfying religious and spiritual needs.

The authorities are not interested in restricting certain religious organizations provided that their activity does not contradict the law and does not violate the interests of other citizens whose rights are also guaranteed by the state.

In some cases national policy is being criticized by general public who is unhappy about invasion of new religious faiths into the historically established national being.

As forecasted by the social activist, in the nearest future Kazakhstani society will remain prejudiced against the new religious movements. It is explained by the devotion of the local population to traditional culture and confessions (Islam, Orthodoxy).

Having conducted its own research in this area, the Civil Society Association “Center for Human Rights Research “Akzhayik”” recommends the following to the Kazakhstani authorities:

- Ensure the non-selective right to freedom of worship that will guarantee shifting away from the arbitrary application of legislation in this area;
- Introduce amendments to the legal acts and regulations aimed at reducing the size of administrative fines imposed on believers;
- Abandon any form of discrimination against religious associations regardless of their official status and state registration;
- Continue creating enabling environment for constructive dialogue between the subjects of religious relations and the state.

Source: Civil Society Association “Center for Human Rights Research “Akzhayik””