

Kyrgyz Look Back in Anger

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They believe Bakiev was as bad as the man he replaced – but some wonder whether the new authorities will be much better.

Kyrgyz say ousted president Kurmanbek Bakiev failed to bring about change and improve the lives of ordinary people, instead returning the country to the widespread corruption and family rule associated with his predecessor.

But some of those interviewed by IWPR also expressed some scepticism about the new authorities, saying that while they hope the interim government will deliver on its promises, their expectations are not high.

Retired teacher Chynara Ismanova, 57, from the southern city of Osh, who supplements her meagre pension by doing home repairs, took part in protests during the March uprising of 2005 – the Tulip Revolution that led to the overthrow of Askar Akaev – and last week's revolt that deposed Bakiev.

Ismanova said the 2005 revolution promised much but delivered little. She points out that since January, utility prices have shot up making the financial situation of people like her even more difficult than it has been over the last few years.

"Prices for electricity and heating have increased. I have not received any subsidies from the authorities so far this year," she said referring to government's promised support for the most vulnerable and public sector workers.

Ismanova believes Bakiev got what he deserves and is glad to see him go. But she is deeply saddened by the loss of life in Bishkek – scores were killed when security forces opened fire on demonstrators in the centre of the city.

"Those in power who shot at their own people deserve only one thing – to be overthrown," she said. "I hope that the new authorities can keep their promises and put the situation in the country back on track."

Nilufar, 42, a housewife from Osh, says she expects the interim government to take action against those responsible for the killing of the demonstrators.

"I want to say that the revolution cost the blood of our sons and daughters. I wish something like this never happens again," she said.

A woman from Bishkek in her late thirties, who wished to remain anonymous, says she has no trust in the new authorities and is sceptical about their chances of holding on to power, fearing that Bakiev may fight back.

In fact, she said she was reluctant to give her name because she was nervous about what would happen in the coming weeks and months. Referring to reports that Bakiev is attempting to mobilise his supporters in the south of the country to take on the interim government, she said that if he succeeded and returned to Bishkek there would be a civil war.

A 50-year-old taxi driver from Bishkek, who gave his name as Sergey, fulminated when IWPR asked him for his views of Bakiev, peppering his outburst with expletives. He said he had no fear of the deposed leader who was no better than his predecessor, "It is not a secret that Bakiev repeated the same mistakes as Akaev."

Sergey said that what happened might have been predicted because the country's clan-based mentality meant that anyone who becomes leader surrounds himself with relatives and concentrates power in the hands of his family.

Shynar Maatkerimova, a 60-year-old pensioner from the village Bokonbaevo in the north-eastern Issykul region, said that people could not stomach Bakiev's policies anymore.

"People have suffered and have had such a hard time that it was impossible to go on like this," said Maatkerimova, who shares her house with her three sons and two daughters-in-law.

"Land tax has been increased. Prices for electricity and heating have gone up. Previously, there were tax

and prices increases but they were not as high and were manageable.

“Young people do not have jobs. They just wander in the streets. We hardly give them an education.”

She hopes that the interim government will keep its pledge to reverse the increase in utility prices which sparked last week’s uprising, but worries that it may turn out to be as corrupt as the one that its replaced.

Asel, who works as a shop assistant in a small food store on the outskirts of Bishkek, is concerned that the political turmoil and lawlessness of the last few days will lead to food shortages.

When IWPR visited her store, it was half-empty, selling only expensive bottles of alcohol and juice. “All this [unrest] had a negative impact on trade because suppliers stopped deliveries,” she said.

Asel was critical of Bakiev and the opposition for their handling of the unrest. She believes that Bakiev should have held meetings with the protesters to discuss their grievances. But she blames the opposition for leaving ordinary people to confront the security forces.

Dmitry Ten, the owner of a Bishkek hairdressing salon, is also critical of the new authorities, claiming they failed to protect businesses from looters in the wake of the revolt. “They did not lift a finger to provide protection,” he said.

“What can I think, if my fellow businessmen have been robbed, [their businesses] damaged, burned down and, after all this, you face your problems on your own.”

According to Nilufar, the housewife from Osh, the new authorities must quickly demonstrate that they are able to govern effectively.

“Many people I know are very poor. And they won’t be happy if officials repeat the mistakes of the old ones,” she said.

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Location: [Kyrgyzstan](#)

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