

Europe and Central Asia

Balkans

➔ **Kosovo U.S.-led Kosovo-Serbia dialogue resumed.** Following cancellation of U.S.-sponsored Kosovo-Serbia talks in June and resumption of EU-led Kosovo-Serbia dialogue in July, Kosovo State Coordinator for Dialogue with Serbia Skender Hyseni 3-5 Aug visited Washington D.C. to request permanent and active U.S. presence at negotiating table; Hyseni 4 Aug stated that U.S. Special Envoy Richard Grenell confirmed he remained “committed and strongly engaged in the Kosovo–Serbia dialogue, which must conclude with mutual recognition”. Grenell 14 Aug announced new meeting between both countries would take place early Sept in Washington D.C; both Hoti and Serbian President Vucic confirmed their participation; PM Hoti 14 Aug stated that they would meet “as two independent countries” and talks would focus on “major economic cooperation projects”. Meanwhile, European Commission 11 Aug signed Memorandum of Understanding for €100mn in macro-financial assistance program.

➔ **North Macedonia Newly elected PM-designate reached agreement on new coalition govt.** Following his election as PM-designate mid-July, head of Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM) party Zoran Zaev 18 Aug reached agreement on new coalition govt with Albanian party Democratic Union for Integration (BDI) led by Ali Ahmeti; under coalition agreement, there will be four deputy PMs – three nominated by SDSM and one by Democratic Union for Integration, and Zaev will remain PM but will transfer role to ethnic Albanian proposed by BDI one hundred days before next election; parliament 31 Aug endorsed new coalition govt led by Zaev as PM. Meanwhile, European Commission 11 Aug signed Memorandum of Understanding for €160mn macro-financial assistance program to support govt in curbing economic fallout of COVID-19 pandemic.

➔ **Montenegro Pro-Serb opposition staged largest protests to date against controversial religion law ahead of late Aug parliamentary elections.** In run-up to parliamentary election held 30 Aug, hundreds 23 Aug protested against controversial Freedom of Confession Act in capital Podgorica and towns across country in largest demonstrations since law was passed in Dec 2019; critics of the law have argued that it facilitates govt register of all religious sites in attempt to reduce role of Serbian Orthodox Church and allow govt to claim religious sites as state property. Leading Serbian Orthodox bishop Amfilohije Radovic 23 Aug announced he will be voting for first time in upcoming elections, urged people to “vote against those who rule with false laws”; President Djukanovic accused Serbian Orthodox Church of running political campaign. Following election, preliminary results 30 Aug indicated that ruling Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) won 29 of 81 seats, short of majority necessary for govt, while opposition parties “For the Future of Montenegro”, “Peace is Our Nation” and “Black on White” won 27, ten and five seats, respectively; DPS and opposition both claimed victory, citing ability to form govt with political allies. Three opposition parties 30 Aug announced intentions to form govt despite significant political differences and next day called on minority parties to join; DPS and President Djukanovic said they will “wait for the final results of the State Electoral Commission” and called on citizens to stay home awaiting confirmation of results.

Caucasus

➔ **Armenia Govt decision to congratulate Belarusian President Lukashenko following his re-election in disputed vote sparked domestic opposition.** PM Pashinyan 10 Aug congratulated Lukashenko on controversial re-election for sixth term in office; President Armen Sargsyan same day sent congratulatory telegram. Pashinyan’s words of congratulations prompted numerous activists to demand that he rescind statement, while politicians, civil society groups and activists gathered in small protests in capital Yerevan and published apology statements, condemning actions of Belarusian police forces and calling for support to opposition groups over following days. In response to criticism, Security Council Secretary Armen Grigoryan 16 Aug said govt had taken decision to congratulate Lukashenko after “comprehensive risk assessment”. Former leader Serzh Sargsyan 19 August spoke for first time in press conference about govt’s alleged mishandling of April 2016 escalation that resulted in loss of life and territory in Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone, stating Azerbaijan launched unpredictable offensive and denying army’s corruption and poor performance. Govt 12 Aug extended some COVID-19 lockdown restrictions until 11 Sept with plans to resume school classes on 15 Sept.

➔ **Azerbaijan Turkey and Russia sought to deepen military cooperation with Azerbaijan.** Following Turkey’s expression of support to Azerbaijan amid July escalation in Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) conflict (see Nagorno-Karabakh), political consultations between both govts and joint military drills increased in Aug. FM Ceyhan Bayramov 11 Aug made first official visit to Turkey; Turkish delegation headed by Defence Minister Hulusi Akar 13-14 Aug visited Baku and met with President Aliyev; ten Azerbaijani opposition parties 6 Aug issued joint

statement urging Turkish and Azerbaijani authorities to discuss greater military cooperation, and calling for Ankara to establish military bases in Azerbaijan, despite Azerbaijan's 2010 military doctrine prohibiting foreign military bases on its territory; Turkish and Azerbaijani military forces 29 July-10 Aug held joint military drills in five cities in Azerbaijan. Meanwhile, Russia made efforts to defuse tensions over recent media reports about weapons it reportedly supplied to Armenia soon after mid-July clashes along state border between Armenia and Azerbaijan; Aliyev 13 Aug told Russian President Putin during phone conversation that media report had raised "concerns and serious questions in the Azerbaijani society". During visit to Baku 25 Aug, Russian Defence Minister Sergey Shoygu said that shipment in question contained construction materials for Russian military base in Armenia's Gyumri city and did not include weapons for Armenia; he proposed more military cooperation with Azerbaijan next year. FM Ceyhun Bayramov 26 Aug visited Moscow to discuss NK peace process and bilateral relations. Following 4 Aug deadly blast in Lebanese capital Beirut, govt 5 Aug offered \$1mn in assistance to Lebanese authorities; opposition groups criticised financial support to Lebanon on grounds that govt was diverting public funds away from COVID-19 financial relief to support foreign country with pro-Armenian bias. Govt 29 Aug extended some COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, including closure of borders, until 30 Sept. Aliyev 10 Aug congratulated Belarusian President Lukashenko on controversial re-election for sixth term in office.

➔ **Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict** **Following major military escalation along state border in July, tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan continued over foreign arms sales.** Following Turkey's expression of support to Azerbaijan amid July escalation in NK conflict, political consultations between both Ankara and Baku and joint military drills increased in Aug. Meanwhile, Russia made efforts to defuse tensions over recent media reports about weapons supplied to Armenia soon after mid-July clashes; Russian Defence Minister Sergey Shoygu 25 Aug said that shipment in question contained construction materials for Russian military base in Armenia's Gyumri city and did not include weapons for Armenia; he proposed more military cooperation with Azerbaijan next year (see Azerbaijan). Russian FM Sergey Lavrov 21 Aug blamed Armenia for triggering mid-July clashes by moving its military outpost closer to border and pipelines that deliver gas and oil from Azerbaijan to Europe. Following Baku's criticism of Serbian weapons being used by Armenia in mid-July clashes, Serbian Deputy PM Nebojsa Stefanovic 11 Aug visited Baku to discuss arms deal and anti-terrorism cooperation with Azerbaijan. Meanwhile, Baku 23 Aug reported detention of one Armenian soldier in north of NK conflict zone; Armenia said officer got lost because of snow in mountainous area and demanded his release. Following 4 Aug blast in Lebanese capital Beirut, de facto NK President Araik Harutyunyan 5 Aug offered support to Lebanese-Armenians and welcomed them to NK; de facto and Armenian govts 9 Aug sent plane with humanitarian aid to Lebanon; Azerbaijan 8 Aug criticised Harutyunyan's plans. Azerbaijan 17 Aug released new satellite photos allegedly confirming construction of new buildings in one illegal settlement in Kelbajar district.

➔ **Georgia** **De facto South Ossetian leader dismissed cabinet while de facto authorities in Abkhazia faced new spike in COVID-19 cases after reopening border crossing with Russia.** Following public calls for his resignation, de facto South Ossetian leader Anatoly Bibilov 28 Aug urgently

dismissed cabinet of ministers. Hundreds of people 28 and 31 Aug protested in front of main governmental building after news emerged of death in custody of local 28-year-old man detained 27 Aug for alleged involvement in 17 Aug shooting on car of de facto interior minister; photos circulated on social media of body with multiple bruises, strengthening torture accusations of inmates; local medics said man died due to heart problems. Amid increasingly severe financial deficits in de facto entity Abkhazia, crossing with Russia reopened 1 Aug following July talks between de facto and Russian authorities; reopening of border with Russia, which closed in March to contain spread of COVID-19, led to most serious spike in coronavirus cases since start of pandemic, rising from 81 in July to 224 confirmed cases as of 20 Aug. De facto leadership kept southern crossing with Georgia closed, except for regular launch of temporary “humanitarian corridors” for ethnic Abkhaz and Georgians with Abkhaz documents. Several UN Security Council members – Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, U.S., and UK – along with Norway and Ireland, 6 Aug made first-ever joint statement in support of Georgia on occasion of 12th anniversary of Aug 2008 war with Russia, criticising presence of Russian military in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

➔ **Russia/North Caucasus Weekly mass protests continued in Far East against July arrest of local governor while security forces led series of counter-terrorism operations in North Caucasus.** In North Caucasus region, National Anti-Terrorism Committee confirmed counter-terrorism operations in Republic of Ingushetia. Notably, special forces 7 Aug killed two militants and detained one in Nazran and Sagopshi localities and 18 Aug led operation that killed two militants in Sunzhensk district; armed clash 23 Aug also took place between security officials and alleged Islamic State (ISIS) militants in Troitskoye, killing three militants and injuring two special force officers. In Far East, weekly Saturday protests continued throughout month in Khabarovsk city against July arrest of local governor and member of nationalist Liberal Democratic Party of Russia Sergei Furga, accused of involvement in murders of businessmen in 2005-06. Acting governor of Khabarovsk territory appointed by Putin in July, Mikhail Degtyarev, 18 Aug announced creation of People’s Council inviting “those who participated in the mass protests, to a dialogue”. Meanwhile, spokesperson for Russian opposition leader Alexey Navalny 20 Aug confirmed Navalny had slipped into coma after falling ill from suspected poisoning; German Chancellor Angela Merkel 24 Aug said that those “responsible must be identified and held accountable.”

Eastern Europe

↓ **Belarus Mass demonstrations erupted in run-up to and following disputed presidential elections, leading to clashes with police and large-scale arrests.** Mass protests against President Lukashenko’s bid for sixth term continued ahead of 9 Aug election: police 8-9 Aug launched violent crackdown on thousands of protesters in capital Minsk. Central Election Commission 10 Aug declared Lukashenko winner with 80% of votes, while opposition candidate Svyatlana Tsikhanouskaya received 9.9%; opposition same day rejected result, accusing govt of rigging vote and calling for dialogue on peaceful transfer of power. Tsikhanouskaya 11 Aug fled to Lithuania following alleged threats from govt.

Thousands took to streets in following weeks including in Minsk, Brest, Grodno, Vitsebsk and other cities demanding Lukashenko step down; police fired tear gas, rubber bullets, stun grenades and used batons to disperse crowds, killing at least three and detaining thousands; protesters in return set up barricades in several areas of Minsk. UK and U.S. 10 Aug expressed grave concern over violence and flawed election; EU foreign policy chief 10 Aug called for immediate release of detainees while UN human rights chief 12 Aug described detentions as “clear violation of international human rights standards”; Belarus govt 13 August issued apology for use of force and released over 2,000 protestors. Lukashenko 15 Aug said “Russia will provide comprehensive assistance to ensure the security of Belarus”; Kremlin 19 Aug said Russia saw no need for intervention for time being. Lukashenko 17 Aug refused to hold new elections while expressing readiness to share power; Tsikhanouskaya’s representative next day announced launch of Coordination Council with aim of negotiating transfer of power; Lukashenko denounced move as “attempt to seize power” and court 25 Aug sentenced two high profile members of Council to ten days in jail. EU 19 Aug announced intention to impose sanctions on individuals; Russian FM 25 Aug warned EU and U.S. against move. Defence ministry 23 Aug warned protestors that army would respond to any “violation of order” near presidential residence; tens of thousands same day gathered peacefully near residence. Supreme Court 25 Aug rejected Tsikhanouskaya’s appeal to annul election results.

📌* **Ukraine** Following late July ceasefire deal between Minsk accord parties, casualties decreased in Donbas conflict zone; Donetsk de facto leadership threatened new escalation. July ceasefire in Donbas conflict zone largely held throughout month: Ukrainian military confirmed no casualties or injuries in combat. Both sides continued to sustain non-combat casualties, however, particularly from landmines, including one Ukrainian serviceman killed 13 Aug, one Russian-backed fighter killed 15 Aug and two Russian-backed fighters killed 28 Aug. Sides accused each other of violating ceasefire rules with small arms, drones and fortification of positions. In move that could escalate conflict, Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR) head Denis Pushilin 28 Aug threatened to order “destruction of trenches and shelters of the Ukrainian Armed Forces fortified or created after 22 July” if these were not removed by 3 Sept. Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) members held heated discussions throughout month on meaning of “special status” for territories currently under control of separatists; Ukrainian delegation head Leonid Kravchuk 4 Aug suggested replacing “special status” with “special system of administration”; in response, DPR de facto FM Natalia Nikonorova warned of Ukrainian attempts to “nullify the [Minsk] agreements”. Deputy head of presidential administration Andriy Yermak 7 Aug announced imminent exchange of 200 prisoners. Luhansk People’s Republic TCG representative Olga Kobtseva 20 Aug said, however, no progress made on swap due to Kyiv govt legislation passed in July stating that no elections would be held in Donetsk and Luhansk until govt takes control of state border, which Kobtseva said would negate “the whole point of the Minsk agreements”. Ukrainian govt said sides 20 Aug agreed to 20 new demining zones and four disengagement zones. Following Ukraine’s extradition request of Wagner military battalion members arrested in Minsk in July, Belarus authorities 14 Aug announced fighters had been handed over to Russia. As of 1 Sept, DPR de facto authorities reported steady rise of total COVID-19 cases to 2,560 while Luhansk People’s Republic registered total 692 cases.

Western Europe/Mediterranean

➔ **Cyprus Tensions rose in Eastern Mediterranean.** Turkey throughout month continued drilling activities with three vessels in disputed maritime areas in Eastern Mediterranean: Cypriot FM 11 Aug criticised presence of Turkish drilling ship in Blocks 2 and 3, stating “once again Turkey chooses the route of unilateral illegal actions”; Turkish exploration vessel Oruç Reis 10 Aug resumed activities in waters south of Kastellorizo island in the area between Greek, Cypriot and Egyptian-claimed waters, same day prompting Greece to hold national security council meeting and state “most of the fleet is ready to be deployed whenever necessary”; Turkish President Erdoğan 13 Aug pledged retaliation if Greece interfered with Oruç Reis activities. Previously, Greek PM Mitsotakis 6 Aug and Erdoğan 10 Aug respectively voiced openness to begin talks to solve issues. Greek frigate Limnos and Turkish vessel Kemalreis reportedly collided 12 Aug. Turkey 15 Aug issued new advisory for drilling activities in maritime area southwest of Cyprus; EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell same day said move “regrettably fuels further tensions and insecurity”. EU foreign affairs council 14 Aug reaffirmed support for Republic of Cyprus and Greece; Borrell 28 Aug said adoption of sanctions against individuals based on Republic of Cyprus recommendations will be sped up and “list of further restrictive measures” could be discussed next month. Meanwhile, France and Republic of Cyprus 1 Aug began implementation of 2017 defence cooperation agreement. Greece, Cyprus, France and Italy 26 Aug launched joint military exercises south of Cyprus; United Arab Emirates same day deployed fighter jets to Greece to take part in joint military exercises. Turkish military 28 Aug reportedly intercepted six Greek F-16 fighter jets that had taken off from Greek island of Crete and headed towards Cyprus, further raising fears of escalation. Turkish Navy 27 Aug announced military drills off the coast of Turkish city Iskenderun until 1-2 Sept and on 29 Aug off the coast of Turkish town Anamur until 11 Sept.

➔ **Northern Ireland (UK) Low-level political tensions continued.** Groups of youths and police 8 Aug clashed in west of regional capital Belfast after police attempted to remove inflammatory material used for bonfires that were held in some republican areas to mark anniversary of introduction of internment which led to mass arrests without trial of hundreds of suspected members of Irish Republican Army (IRA) in August 1971. Police mid-Aug launched joint security operation with Republic of Ireland police that led to arrest of ten suspected members of dissident republican group “New IRA”.

➔ **Turkey Turkish military continued operations against Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) in northern Iraq and in rural areas of Turkey’s south east, while tensions rose in eastern Mediterranean.** In northern Iraq, Turkish military reportedly seized control of Jaldah mountain as well as the areas of Mamand and Kohareş located in Haftanin region and conducted 15 air raids on PKK positions throughout month, including drone strike 11 Aug that reportedly killed several PKK militants and two Iraqi army officers in the Sidakan area in north-eastern Iraq (see Iraq); in retaliation, PKK 17 Aug announced it had shot down Turkish helicopter, which was unconfirmed. In south east, amid small scale clashes with PKK militants, security forces 12 Aug launched major anti-PKK operation in Amanos mountains in southern border province of Hatay; operation is fourth of its

kind announced since 20 July. In northern Syria, low-intensity clashes continued between Turkish security forces and People's Protection Units (YPG). Govt continued moves toward criminalising members of Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP); police detained at least 95 HDP members throughout month. Govt continued crackdown on Islamic State (ISIS) in Turkey: security personnel reportedly detained 83 individuals with suspected ISIS links throughout month. Security forces 13 Aug in Bursa province's İnegöl district detained foreign national who illegally entered Turkey from Syria reportedly plotting suicide attack. Amid continued Turkish drilling in disputed maritime areas in eastern Mediterranean and reported collision 12 Aug between Greek frigate and Turkish vessel, tensions rose with Greece and Republic of Cyprus (see Cyprus). Following visit to Athens, German FM Heiko Maas 25 Aug visited Ankara to help defuse tensions; Turkish FM Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu said Turkey is ready for dialogue without any preconditions but talks must not include Greek preconditions either. Following the conclusions of the informal EU foreign council 28 Aug, Turkish MFA released a statement saying the EU has no authority to criticise Turkey's hydrocarbon activities within its continental shelf and asking EU countries to refrain from supporting "Greece's maximalist claims that violate international law". COVID-19 cases began to resurge throughout month with 1,200-1,500 cases reported daily since the start of August.

Central Asia

➔ **Kazakhstan** Amid slowing spread of COVID-19, govt maintained some restrictions; meanwhile, several protests took place throughout month. Following stabilisation of COVID-19 cases, Health Minister Alexei Tsoi 3 Aug advised residents to “maintain positions that have been won through very hard trials endured by the entire population and healthcare system”. Dozens of vendors in capital Nur-Sultan 3 Aug protested against closure of Artyom shopping mall as part of COVID-19 lockdown measures and condemned govt’s relief sum of \$100 as insufficient. Govt 14 Aug said some health measures would be maintained, including weekend lockdowns and closure of schools until Oct, but postponed July decision to document pneumonia cases with COVID-19 symptoms. Police in Almaty city 3 Aug detained activist Serik Azhibai for protesting outside Chinese consulate; Azhibai accused Chinese ambassador of stating military cooperation between two countries could help quash possible riots; court same day sentenced Azhibai to 15 days in prison on charges of staging unapproved public event and disobeying police orders. District court in Almaty 12 Aug sentenced civil rights activist Asya Tulesova to 18 months of restrictive freedom for assaulting and insulting police during 6 June protest that called for range of democratic reforms. Uzbek law enforcement 17 Aug confirmed Kazakh authorities deported Uzbek opposition activist Khurram Berdiev to Uzbek capital Tashkent (see Uzbekistan). In Aqmola province, at least 100 activists 8 Aug gathered in Talapker village to commemorate prominent civil rights campaigner Dulat Aghadil in Talapker village who died in custody in Feb 2020. In response, police 26-27 Aug detained dozens in cities across country, and courts imposed short jail sentences or fines on activists for attending unsanctioned rally. In south, security forces early Aug reportedly deployed officers to Qosmezgil village after late July clashes between several young ethnic Uzbek and ethnic Kazakh men, which left four injured, including one policeman. In north east, security forces 16 Aug reportedly closed off roads to Baydibek-biy village, day after alleged inter-ethnic clash between Chechens and Kazakhs.

➔ **Kyrgyzstan Tensions surfaced on Kyrgyz-Tajik border while govt asked Belarusian govt to hand over former PM wanted since 2010.** Clashes along Kyrgyz-Tajik border 6 Aug killed one Tajik villager and wounded one Kyrgyz border guard; officials from both countries same day confirmed tensions had been resolved. Foreign ministry 11 Aug asked Belarusian diplomat in capital Bishkek to detain and extradite former PM Daniyar Usenov, citing investigation into Usenov's alleged involvement in killing of nearly 100 anti-govt protesters in 2010; move comes after Usenov's 10 Aug public appearance with Belarusian President Lukashenko near Belarusian capital Minsk. After Kyrgyz State Committee for National Security in Bishkek 9 Aug detained Uzbek journalist Bobomurod Abdullaev at Uzbekistan's request on grounds of unspecified crimes, NGO Human Rights Watch 12 Aug urged Kyrgyz authorities not to extradite Abdullaev, citing "risk of torture", while U.S. ambassador to Uzbekistan 13 Aug expressed deep concern; govt 22 Aug announced extradition of Abdullaev to Uzbekistan, saying Uzbek govt provided assurances that he would not be ill-treated (see also Uzbekistan). Following July decision to begin counting pneumonia cases suspected to be tied to COVID-19, govt 21 Aug reported new cases of pneumonia with COVID-19 symptoms. Authorities 26 Aug announced lifting of some COVID-19 restrictions imposed since March, including allowing Friday prayers to resume in mosques from 28 Aug.

➔ **Tajikistan Govt targeted members of proscribed Muslim groups in wave of arrests and detentions.** Head of anti-organised crime department of interior ministry, Shodi Hafizzoda, 3 Aug said more than 200 members of terrorist groups were arrested in past six months. State Committee for National Security 3 Aug reportedly summoned and detained former Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) member Jaloliddin Mahmudov on unknown charges; govt designated group as extremist in 2015. Law enforcement 14 Aug arrested three sons of late IRPT founder, Said Kiemitdin Gozi, on unknown charges. Following July trials of 116 members of Muslim Brotherhood, group proscribed since 2006, court in northern Sughd province mid-Aug found 20 people guilty of Muslim Brotherhood membership, sentencing them to 5-7 years in prison. Parliament 6 Aug scheduled presidential elections for 11 Oct.

➔ **Turkmenistan Despite continued denial of COVID-19 cases inside country, authorities continued to grapple with health concerns.** While authorities continued to deny presence of COVID-19 in country, govt 6 Aug ordered civil servants to pay for mandatory COVID-19 tests. After World Health Organization (WHO) mission urged govt to "activate critical measures to prepare for COVID-19 outbreak" during July visit, President Berdymukhamedov 7 Aug agreed to second health mission and reportedly consented to submitting COVID-19 test samples after call with WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus; WHO European director same day confirmed Turkmenistan govt cooperation but raised concerns about national rise in pneumonia cases attributed to COVID-19. In Lebap regional capital Turkmenabat, 120 health workers early Aug reportedly signed letter to regional govt demanding better protective equipment amid worsening health crisis, prompting authorities to threaten prosecution. Following Constitutional Court meeting on 19 Aug, parliament 22 Aug discussed amendments to constitution, reportedly aimed at establishing bicameral parliament; People's Council to make final decision on amendment in Sept.

➔ **Uzbekistan Protesters rallied in capital Tashkent against govt plan to amend district boundaries.** After govt 5 Aug announced plans to merge parts of Tashkent with surrounding region, hundreds of Tashkent residents 6 Aug protested against potential loss of status as capital residents and associated education, employment and housing privileges; authorities 11 Aug confirmed cancellation of redistricting plans. Govt early Aug approved development plan for Sokh exclave in Ferghana Valley, including resumption of flights to enclave for first time since 1990s. General Prosecutor's Office 12 Aug confirmed it had called on Kyrgyz authorities to detain Uzbek journalist Bobomurod Abdullaev; Kyrgyz govt 22 Aug extradited Abdullaev to Tashkent citing assurances by Uzbek authorities; upon arrival, Abdullaev was released but barred from movement inside country pending investigation for unknown charges. Law enforcement in Tashkent 17 Aug announced Kazakh authorities handed over Uzbek opposition activist Khurram Berdiev, arrested in Kazakhstan in Feb (see Kazakhstan), and that Berdiev had been charged with human trafficking. Interior ministry 10 Aug published draft legislation to allow right to hold public demonstrations; organisers will have to apply for permission two weeks prior and must comply with specific restrictions. President Mirziyoyev 27 Aug pardoned and released 113 convicts mostly sentenced on charges of religious extremism, including former Tashkent imam Rukhiddin Fahriddinov detained for past 15 years.