

## **Testimony of Ambassador Samira Sydykova**

### **Ambassador of The Republic of Kyrgyzstan to the United States**

It is a great honor for me to testify a second time before the Helsinki Commission of the US Congress. My first appearance here was in 2005 immediately following the Tulip Revolution, when I described as an eyewitness to these events the reasons for what had occurred in Kyrgyzstan, when I was not yet my country's Ambassador to the USA and Canada.

Today, with the passage of four years we can draw some definite conclusions and it is wonderful that I have been offered this opportunity a second time. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

First of all, we should take note that the upcoming presidential elections, scheduled for July 23rd 2009, are in some sense early and had been called by the representatives of several opposition political parties. But the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan has confirmed the date, citing the new edition of our Constitution ratified in 2007.

Over this time various political groups have proposed a most diverse assortment of constitutional reforms, but have never been able to arrive at a consolidated position. In just this way they again have not been able to put forward a common opposition candidate for the presidential elections.

Speaking of the past four years in our country, I would like to point out regretfully that the leaders of the Tulip Revolution have not given us the chance to hold any

triumphal marches in our land. First of all this was because they urgently needed to restore an economy pillaged by former President Akaev, and, second, to fight off the criminal attacks on the new authorities via efforts to seize Government House.

The protests, which struck Kyrgyzstan's capital Bishkek, had the most diverse set of goals—from the satisfaction of the political ambitions of those forces, which just like President Bakiev, strove for the presidency in 2005, to efforts by the exiled family of President Akaev to seek revenge and return home and resume power. For these purposes money was used to bribe people so that they would come out to demonstrate on the public squares.

I am not trying in any way to bad mouth the opposition, among whom I count my good friends, but I can say one thing for certain, that every one of them was during this period been offered positions in the Government, up to and including the job of prime minister. And, in fact, two of the opposition leaders were prime minister for some time, but subsequently left the job, I think, for understandable reasons, since it is no easy task to restore a country's economy and, on the other hand, to become unpopular against the backdrop of the growing world economic crisis, which has to some extent affected Kyrgyzstan.

Speaking of the current socio- political situation in the country, I would like to quote the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Joao Soares, who recently visited Kyrgyzstan. "Kyrgyzstan is, if you will, the only country in the region with a functioning single party system," said Mr. Soares. And this is truly so. Kyrgyzstan's Parliament is chosen on the basis of elections from party lists. Government decisions in the country are made with respect for the opinions of

civil society. Representatives of civil organizations openly discuss any and all affairs of state and freely offer their conclusions for the final making decisions or changing of the existing situation. Naturally, this meets a certain resistance among older elements of the bureaucracy, but it is a process that requires time, a new generation of politicians and novel approaches. Nevertheless, I repeat once more, an open society and Free Press in Kyrgyzstan are working -- everything is subject to discussion. I get enormous satisfaction reading Kyrgyz newspapers. And I have to point out that we are also democratic -- the only ones in Central Asia to be so.

Just recently a special OSCE representative on Freedom of the Media Miklos Haraszti expressed his concern about attacks on journalists taken place over some time ago. I am also concerned about it. The cases have not yet finally investigated therefore it is hard to give any assessments but due to the openness of Kyrgyzstan and impacts coming from many local and foreign political actors in the region as well as growing religious extremism, one can easily suspect anyone you like. It is clear we should be consistent in strengthening local law enforcement bodies which are obliged to solve the crimes. At the same time it is worth noting that one of the OSCE program for Kyrgyzstan is targeted on capacity building of local law enforcement bodies. And I am sure that with continued support of OSCE and civil society my Government will soon overcome the said problems.

Touching upon the impending elections, President Bakiev, has proposed doubling the number of international observers in order to insure the maximum openness and transparency of the process. He also expressed his hope that the OSCE observers will provide an objective evaluation of the upcoming presidential

elections that will enable the further strengthening of democratic transformations in the country. The ODIHR has already opened a mission in Kyrgyzstan.

Among seven candidates for the highest government office are two of the strongest opposition politicians who have managed to summon tens of thousands of supporters to public demonstrations. The elections promised to be interesting., and the results transparent.

Thank you for your attention.