

Tokaev Asks Putin to Freeze the Conflict. What Lies behind this Statement?

News:

On 25 July, the **INTERFAX.RU news agency** reported: *“During a meeting in Omsk with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Kazakhstan’s President Kasym-Jomart Tokaev proposed freezing the conflict in Ukraine, returning to the Istanbul formula for a settlement, and moving towards peace.*

‘Perhaps it is time to freeze this conflict and return to the Istanbul Formula 2.0, as significant progress was made there. Naturally, this should be under the guarantees of the major powers, including Russia, and we should continue to move towards the long-awaited peace,’ he said.

At the same time, the President of Kazakhstan noted that he refuses to act as a mediator between the countries on the issue of a settlement. “I refuse to act as a mediator, because I know that Russia is a great country, the Russian people are a great people, and, as they say, they will manage on their own without any mediators,” he said.

Comment:

The presidents of Central Asia sometimes allow themselves to speak out openly, seemingly against Putin’s policies. Following such statements, many people assume that these presidents and their countries are pursuing policies independent of Moscow, but this is a superficial and mistaken view.

If we examine Tokaev’s recent statements more closely, we can observe rhetoric that runs counter to the idea of independence.

Firstly: Tokaev refers to the war – Russia’s attack on Ukraine – as a ‘conflict’, even though the war has now been going on for five years. In Russia, the term ‘special military operation’ (SMO) is officially used rather than ‘war’. In the Russian Federation, it is forbidden to call this a war, and there are strict administrative laws in place, with penalties ranging up to criminal liability. Meanwhile, Ukraine and many other countries openly refer to Russia’s attack on Ukraine as a war. Tokayev’s adherence to precisely this Russian terminology suggests that he does not dare to speak out against Putin’s policies.

Secondly: This statement was made against the backdrop of increasingly frequent attacks by Ukrainian UAVs on the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) and its associated infrastructure in the Novorossiysk area. The CPC is the main route for oil exports, the bulk of which consists of Kazakhstani crude from giant fields (Tengiz, Kashagan, Karachaganak). Any delays in oil exports hit the Kazakhstani economy and beyond.

Moscow adds its own oil to this flow, blending it all into a single grade known as CPC Blend, which Russia exports to global markets via its Black Sea ports. It could be said that Tokaev, whilst positioning himself as neutral in this war and desiring a swift end to the conflict, wanted Ukraine to cease its attacks on the CPC pipeline. However, at the same time, Tokaev was pursuing not only his own interests, but also those of Russia. This is because Moscow continues to make money from selling oil via the CPC pipeline.

The reality for Central Asian leaders, such as Tokaev, Rahmon, Mirziyoyev and others is that they owe their existence to Russia's military support. Russian military bases are present on the territory of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. And they do not merely have a presence there; they uphold the regimes established by Moscow. Any unrest on the part of the peoples of these lands is brutally suppressed.

A clear example of this is the events of January 2022 (Red January) in the city of Almaty, Kazakhstan. Following yet another series of price rises for liquefied gas, mass protests broke out across the country. The situation in Almaty spiraled out of control. Tokaev urgently declared a state of emergency and appealed to Moscow for assistance from the CSTO. The protests were brutally suppressed; hundreds were killed and thousands were imprisoned.

Today, with Russia embroiled in a protracted war with Europe, the Muslims of Central Asia have a greater opportunity than ever to rid themselves of the tyrannical rulers imposed by Moscow. It is time for the Muslims of Central Asia to cast off the borders drawn by disbelieving colonisers, to break free from the shackles of nationalist ideology, and to unite on the basis of Islam to revive the Second Righteous State of the Khilafah (Caliphate) by the method of the Prophethood.

Allah Almighty said in His Noble Book: ﴿إِنْ تَنْصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنْصُرْكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَكُمْ﴾ **“O believers! If you stand up for Allah, He will help you and make your steps firm”** [47:7].

**Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by
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