

OSCE Approves Police Force for Kyrgyzstan

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VIENNA — Europe's main security watchdog on Thursday approved plans to send a 52-member unarmed police force to help restore peace in southern Kyrgyzstan.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe said its 56-nation permanent council had voted to deploy the mission "without delay."

At least 300 people, and possibly hundreds more, were killed in several days of clashes in June between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. Thousands of homes were torched in the cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad, and 400,000 people fled at the height of the violence.

Meanwhile, the interim government, which assumed power after a popular revolt in April, said it had detained a brother of ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiyev on suspicion of involvement in the violence.

It said in a statement that Akhmat Bakiyev was detained in Jalal-Abad late Wednesday after a special operation by its forces and that he would be flown to the capital, Bishkek.

"During the first interrogation, A. Bakiyev began to confess his involvement in the recent mass disorder in the south of the republic," the interim government said in the statement. This statement could not immediately be verified independently.

The interim government has repeatedly accused supporters of Kurmanbek Bakiyev of stoking violence in the south. Bakiyev, exiled in Belarus, has denied involvement.

Both Kyrgyz and Uzbeks, who have a roughly equal share of the population in the south, have said they suffered sustained attacks. Many ethnic Uzbeks said Kyrgyz security forces did nothing to help them and even participated in the attacks.

Washington-based Refugees International, which sent a mission to the region, said ethnic Uzbek residents were facing interrogation and arbitrary detention by security forces, in a region where ethnic tensions remain "close to boiling point."

"An immediate presence of trained international police officers and human rights monitors is critical to protecting lives and human rights in this tinderbox of violence and abuse," said Dawn Calabria, senior advisor for Refugees International.

The Vienna-based OSCE, chaired this year by Kyrgyzstan's northern neighbor Kazakhstan, said the 52 police officers would help to train local forces. They are expected to stay for about four months, and the group could be expanded to 102 members.

"The police advisors will play an important role in reassuring the people of Kyrgyzstan following the tragic events of recent months and will further strengthen the capacities of the police and help in restoring public trust," the OSCE said.

There are some signs of recovery. More than 1,100 people have started repairing roads, cleaning up irrigation systems and removing litter as part of an initiative by the United Nations Development Program and local municipalities.

The UNDP said in a statement that it had set aside \$1.4 million for the program, which will run until the end of this year, and was seeking additional funds.

It said workers could earn about \$6.50 per day for two-week stints before rotating with others qualified for the program.

"Due to the violent events, the local market was closed and I lost my job," the UNDP quoted a participant in the program, Gulnar Bidokhimova, as saying. Trained as a nurse, she had been working as a market trader in Jalal-Abad when the violence began.

"When I heard about this opportunity from my friends, I approached the mayor's office and registered with a team of painters," she said.

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