**Kyrgyzstan: Leading Paper Says It's Fighting President for Survival**

April 28, 2015 - 6:13am, by [Chris Rickleton](http://www.eurasianet.org/taxonomy/term/3068)

A leading newspaper in Kyrgyzstan claims President Almazbek Atambayev’s administration has launched a frontal assault on critical media in the run-up to parliamentary elections this fall.

The embattled, opposition-minded Vechernii Bishkek, whose ownership is the subject of a protracted [legal dispute](http://www.eurasianet.org/node/70306), is under investigation by the secret police for accusing, in an April 17 [statement](http://www.vb.kg/doc/311051_obrashenie_vb%3A_kto_vedet_strany_k_katastrofe.html), the president’s aids of attempting to seize the paper.

The State Committee on National Security, the GKNB – which answers to Atambayev – is evaluating if the paper’s statement contains “public calls for a violent overthrow of the constitutional order in the country,” Fergana.ru reported April 25, [citing](http://enews.fergananews.com/news.php?id=2973&utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter) a GKNB press release. Rights lawyers complain the GKNB finds whatever it wants when it conducts such linguistic investigations of allegedly offensive documents.

In Vechernii Bishkek’s statement, the paper appealed to citizens not to remain indifferent to an expropriation bid they say is backed by Atambayev’s team, and which may eventually lead to owner Alexander Kim losing full control of the paper and its lucrative printing press.

Officials in Atambayev’s administration, the paper argues, are trying to silence independent media ahead of parliamentary elections this fall; presidential elections are due in 2017.

The offending statement alleges the current elite around Atambayev is adopting the rapacious habits of previous authoritarian regimes. It may be slightly hyperbolic at times, but one would be hard-pressed to find anything in the statement that threatens the government’s existence.

Atambayev has unnerved many with his [attitude](http://www.eurasianet.org/node/71316) to independent journalism recently. In December he complained that local journalists were too critical and called on hacks to “love their country a little.”

Then, in a [speech](http://www.vb.kg/doc/309241_atambaev%3A_nado_bylo_vygoniat_iz_strany_politikov_izdateley_i_jyrnalistov.html) on the fifth anniversary of the violent April 2010 uprising, he said Kyrgyzstan’s post-revolutionary government should have followed Ukraine’s example in kicking out of the country “politicians, journalists and publishers” that “pour dirt” on the revolution. Some outlets, he said, “continued to serve the family of the ousted president,” Kurmanbek Bakiyev.

Vechernii Bishkek, which had been close to the former regime, has been one of the few news outlets to report critically on the April 7 events – to which the new government ascribes mythic significance – and has good reason to believe it was the target of that particular barb.

If the GKNB deems Vechernii Bishkek an instigator of political unrest, it would be a major blow to the revolution’s ideals, activists say. After all, apart from relative press freedom, Kyrgyzstan has little else to show for the bloody events five years ago.