



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL TURKMENISTAN: APPEAL CASE

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Ruslan Tukhbatullin, brother of exiled civil society activist, targeted

Amnesty International is concerned that major-general **Ruslan Tukhbatullin** was forced to hand in his resignation from his post in the military at the end of March 2005 because of his family relationship with Farid Tukhbatullin, a known exiled human rights defender and former prisoner of conscience, and in order to put pressure on Farid Tukhbatullin to stop his human rights work. As the flat where 41-year-old Ruslan Tukhbatullin, his wife, their two children and their baby live belongs to the military, the family was requested to vacate their flat in due course.

On 28 March a senior official at the military administration of Dashoguz region in eastern Turkmenistan requested Ruslan Tukhbatullin to hand in a "voluntary" resignation. Amnesty International received reliable information that the official had acted on instructions by the Secret Service who had requested the military administration to dismiss Ruslan Tukhbatullin because his brother Farid Tukhbatullin "attacks Turkmenistan too much".

Shortly afterwards Ruslan Tukhbatullin, who had been working in the Turkmen military since 1993 including in senior positions in the military administration of Dashoguz region, applied for another position in the military. However, the next day the head of that department told him he would not be able to employ Ruslan Tukhbatullin despite his good qualifications and that "if he was able to find work at all, it would be somewhere outside this region in some village far away".

Ruslan Tukhbatullin © Private

On 3 May several men who were believed to be acting on instructions of the Turkmen Ministry of National Security began to seek out people in the town of Dashoguz who have access to the internet. The search was reportedly aimed at stopping information about Ruslan Tukhbatullin from being "leaked" to the international community.

Since Farid Tukhbatullin was forced to emigrate in June 2003 the Turkmen Secret Service has several times attempted to obtain information about Farid Tukhbatullin's activities and whereabouts through his brother. Ruslan Tukhbatullin had in the past been warned that unless Farid Tukhbatullin "kept his head down" Ruslan Tukhbatullin would be dismissed from his work.

Turkmenistan: background information

Amnesty International is seriously concerned about the widespread abuse of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights in Turkmenistan. In recent years civil society activists, political dissidents, members of religious minority groups as well as their families have in many cases been subjected to human rights violations including harassment, arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment, and imprisonment after unfair trials. At least one man has been forcibly confined to a psychiatric hospital solely to punish him for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression. Many dissidents, members of religious minorities and their families have been forced into exile in recent years and thousands are believed to be on a "blacklist" preventing them from leaving the country. According to credible reports, Turkmen Secret Service agents have in many cases tracked down exiled dissidents, in particular in Russia, to silence them by way of intimidation and assaults.

In March 2003 Farid Tukhbatullin, the then head of the non-governmental organization Dashoguz Ecological Club in eastern Turkmenistan, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment after an unfair trial, in connection with his attendance of an international human rights conference in Moscow, organized by the International Helsinki Federation for Human

Rights and the Moscow-based Memorial Human Rights Centre. Amnesty International adopted him as a prisoner of conscience.

Farid Tukhbatullin was released in April 2003 following an international outcry and forced into exile. He now resides in a Western European country where he has founded the non-governmental organization Turkmen Initiative for Human Rights.

The authorities have in many cases targeted relatives of dissidents to put pressure on the dissidents so that they would refrain from making critical statements about the Turkmen government. For example, AI has documented cases where family members of dissidents including dissidents in exile have been summoned to the Secret Service, dismissed from their work or threatened with confiscation of their flats. In addition, scores of family members of government critics whom the authorities implicated in the alleged assassination attempt on the President in November 2002 faced detention, harassment, eviction from their homes, and dismissal from their workplaces. Many of them were reportedly targeted solely because of their family relations with government opponents.

Please send politely worded appeals to the Turkmen authorities to arrive as quickly as possible, in Turkmen, Russian, English or your own language:

- urging the authorities to stop the intimidation and harassment of the family members of dissidents, religious believers, journalists and civil society activists.
- expressing concern that on 28 March 2005 the military administration of Dashoguz region forced major-general Ruslan Tukhbatullin to resign from his post in the military and ordered him to vacate his flat. It was believed that the military administration was acting on instructions of the Secret Service and that Ruslan Tukhbatullin was targeted because of his family relationship with the exiled human rights defender Farid Tukhbatullin and in order to put pressure on Farid Tukhbatullin.
- urging the authorities to promptly undertake substantial reforms of domestic law and institutions to implement the country's obligations under the human rights treaties that Turkmenistan is a party to.

Please send your appeals to:

President of Turkmenistan:

Prezident Turkmenistana Saparmurat A. NIYAZOV;

Apparat Prezidenta;

744000 ASHGABAT;

TURKMENISTAN

Fax: (+993 12) 35 51 12

Salutation: Dear President

Minister of Foreign Affairs:

Ministr Rashid MEREDOV;

Ministerstvo inostrannykh del Turkmenistana;

83 pr. Magtymguly;

744000 ASHGABAT;

TURKMENISTAN

Fax: (+993 12) 35 42 41

E-mail: mfatm@online.tm

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Turkmenistan accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND ANY REPLIES FROM THE AUTHORITIES AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO THE INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. (Europe and Central Asia Program; Eurasia team, Amnesty International; 1 Easton Street; London WC1X 0DW; United Kingdom)