

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety / Incommunicado detention/
Possible prisoner of conscience

11 January 2000

TURKMENISTAN

Nurberdi NURMAMEDOV, aged 57
(????????? ??????????)

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of opposition activist Nurberdi Nurmamedov, reportedly detained incommunicado on charges fabricated to punish him for his peaceful political activities.

Nurberdi Nurmamedov, co-chairman of the opposition movement *Agzybirlik*, was arrested on 5 January 2000 at his house in the Turkmen capital, Ashgabat. Ten men in plain clothes, reportedly KGB officers, searched his house and arrested him without a warrant, and took him and his two sons to the Ahalskiy velayat police station. His sons were questioned and then released.

Nurberdi Nurmamedov went on hunger-strike immediately after his arrest. He is reported to be in the KGB prison in Ashgabat, with no access to a lawyer, but his family have not been able to confirm his whereabouts. Amnesty International knows of other prisoners who have been ill-treated in incommunicado pre-trial detention.

Nurberdi Nurmamedov is charged with "threatening to murder" and "hooliganism" (Articles 116 and 279,2 of the Criminal Code of Turkmenistan). The alleged victim of the first charge has written a statement denying that the accusations are true. Amnesty International has recorded cases where criminal charges have apparently been fabricated to punish people for non-violent opposition to the government.

Nurberdi Nurmamedov has been repeatedly detained and fined over the past few years for his political activity. He is one of the few opposition figures in Turkmenistan to openly criticize President Saparmurat Niyazov's politics. In December 1999 he announced that *Agzybirlik* would boycott the parliamentary elections on 12 December, calling them "undemocratic". He also criticized President Niyazov's appointment as "President for Life" on 28 December 1999.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since Turkmenistan gained independence in 1991, its political climate has stifled fundamental human rights. The government makes no secret of its disrespect for international human rights norms, arguing that certain individual rights and freedoms are expendable because they threaten the implementation of policies intended to resolve the country's social and economic problems within the first decade of independence.

Amnesty International has recorded a pattern of human rights violations by the Turkmenistan government. These include the sentencing of government opponents to long prison terms on apparently fabricated criminal charges; the arrest and ill-treatment of people involved in organized or spontaneous anti-government protests; apparently unwarranted incarceration of opposition activists in psychiatric hospitals; and ill-treatment by police in prisons.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in Russian, English or your own language:

- expressing concern at the arrest of Nurberdi Nurmamedov on 5 January;
- urging that he be protected from ill-treatment and allowed immediate access to his family and legal representatives;
- noting that the Turkmenistan government has been known to fabricate criminal charges against people, apparently to punish them for non-violent opposition to the government, and that such people would therefore be prisoners of conscience;
- stating that if he is detained solely for exercising his fundamental right to freedom of opinion and expression, Nurberdi Nurmamedov should be released immediately and unconditionally.

APPEALS TO: (Please note that fax numbers can be difficult to obtain. If a voice answers, repeat 'fax' until connected)

1. President of Turkmenistan, Saparmurad Atayevich NIYAZOV

Turkmenistan

744000 g. Ashgabat

Apparat Prezidenta

Prezidentu NIYAZOVU S.A.

Faxes: + 993 12 25 51 12 (it can be difficult to get a connection)

Telegrams: Turkmenistan, 744000 Ashgabat, Prezidentu Niyazovu

Salutation: Dear President Niyazov

2. Procurator General of Turkmenistan, Gurbanbibi ATAYANOVA (Ms)

Turkmenistan

g. Ashgabat

ul. Seidi, 4

Prokuratura Turkmenistana

Generalnomu prokuroru ATAYANOVOY G.

Faxes: + 993 12 35 44 82 (it can be difficult to get a connection)

Telegrams: Turkmenistan, Ashgabat, Prokuratura, Gen. prokuroru Atayanovoy

Salutation: Dear Procurator General

3. Chairman of the Supreme Court of Turkmenistan, Ysa RAKHMANOV

Turkmenistan

744000 Ashgabat

prospekt Saparmurad Turkmenbashi, 18

Verkhovny Sud Turkmenistana

Predsedatelyu RAKHMANOVU Y.

Telegrams: Turkmenistan, 744000 Ashgabat, Verkhovny sud, Predsedatelyu Rakhmonovu

Salutation: Dear Chairman

COPIES TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, Boris SHIKHMYRADOV

Turkmenistan

744000 g. Ashgabat

pr. Magtymguly, 83

Ministerstvo inostrannykh

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Ministru SHIKHMYRADOVU B.

Faxes: + 993 12 51 14 30 (it can be difficult to get a connection)

Ambassador of Turkmenistan in Moscow, Niyazklych NURKLYCHEV

Rossiya

g. Moskva
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and to diplomatic representatives of Turkmenistan accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 22 February 2000.