

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 58/06 (EUR 61/001/2006, 17 March 2006) Fear of torture or ill-treatment/incommunicado detention/prisoners of conscience

TURKMENISTAN

**Dzhumadurdy OVEZOV (m), 54, journalist
Meretmuhammet KHOMMADOV (m), 54, journalist**

The Prague office of the US-funded *Radio Liberty* has reported that Dzhumadurdy Ovezov and Meretmuhammet Khommadov were released on 17 March.

The two journalists for *Radio Liberty* were arrested on 7 March and held incommunicado at an unknown location. As international pressure calling for their release grew, the Turkmenistan authorities reportedly informed the Representative on Freedom of the Media for the international non-governmental organization, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), that the two were arrested for "hooliganism" and sentenced to 15 days' community service. However, there are strong indications that the two were arrested as a punishment for their peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression, and in order to prevent them from passing on information about Turkmenistan to other countries. Before they were released, security officers reportedly forced Dzhumadurdy Ovezov and Meretmuhammet Khommadov to sign papers stating that they would stop working for *Radio Liberty*.

No further action is required. Amnesty International believes that international pressure, including from the UA network, played an important role in securing the release of Dzhumadurdy Ovezov and Meretmuhammet Khommadov. Thanks to all who sent appeals.