

URGENT ACTION

TURKMENISTAN ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVIST RELEASED

On 6 November, male environmentalist Andrei Zatoka was released after he paid a fine of 1,000 Manat (about US\$350). Eight days earlier, on 29 October, he had been sentenced to five years' imprisonment after an unfair trial. According to sources in Turkmenistan, his release was on the condition that he renounced his Turkmen citizenship and left the country.

Andrei Zatoka, a 53-year-old environmentalist with both Turkmen and Russian citizenship, was arrested by police in his home city of Dashoguz, northern Turkmenistan, on 20 October on charges of "hooliganism". He was later charged with inflicting injuries of "medium severity".

Andrei Zatoka's conviction by the Dashoguz City Court was based on an investigation which was neither effective nor thorough. Amnesty International believes that he was targeted because of his peaceful work as an environmental activist, and considered him to be a prisoner of conscience. The organization called on the authorities to release him (see <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR61/007/2009/en>).

On 6 November, Andrei Zatoka's case was reconsidered by the Dashoguz Regional Court. The Court ruled that at his trial, Dashoguz City Court had not given due regard to mitigating factors such as his environmental activity, his reputation as a scientist and his cooperation with law enforcement on environmental issues. His prison sentence was commuted to a fine. Having paid the fine, Andrei Zatoka and his wife left Turkmenistan for Russia on 7 November.

Amnesty International will continue to monitor Andrei Zatoka's situation.

Thanks to all those who took action on behalf of Andrei Zatoka. No further appeals are required.

This is the first update of UA 286/09 (EUR 61/006/2009). Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR61/006/2009/en>

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