

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Amnesty International urges Turkmenistan to fully implement recommendations made under the Universal Periodic Review

The Turkmen government should fully implement the recommendations issued by the UN's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group in Geneva today, Amnesty International said.

Amnesty International calls on the government to use the opportunity of its review under the UPR to live up to its promises to strengthen human rights protection in the country.

Amnesty International welcomes Turkmenistan's express support of recommendations to guarantee the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly; to seek, receive and impart information; to allow independent non-governmental organizations to register and work freely; and to end harassment and intimidation of journalists. However, Amnesty International notes that Turkmenistan did not specify what concrete action it intends to take to implement these recommendations in its written response to the Human Rights Council on 19 March. The organization calls on the government to give immediate effect to these recommendations.

Amnesty International is deeply concerned about serious violations against human rights defenders, journalists and dissidents in Turkmenistan. The organization has received reports that Annakurban Amanklychev and Sapardurdy Khadzhiev of the Turkmen Helsinki Foundation had their appeal for pardon rejected by the President in 2008. Both are reported to have been tortured while in custody. Amnesty International considers them as prisoners of conscience and urges their immediate release, as recommended during the review.

Amnesty International is also very concerned that there appears to have been no independent investigation into the unexplained death in custody of their co-defendant Ogulsapar Muradova in September 2006. Amnesty International urges Turkmenistan to reconsider the recommendation, made during the review, to hold an independent inquiry into her death.

Other key recommendations made during the review calls on Turkmenistan to protect human rights defenders, to eradicate impunity for torture and other ill-treatment, and to guarantee freedom of the press. Amnesty International urges the government to clearly indicate its full support for these key recommendations and ensure their prompt and full implementation. In this regard, Amnesty International regrets that Turkmenistan did not agree to release all prisoners of conscience and human rights defenders, to review politically motivated trials, to account for those subjected to enforced disappearance, to lift travel bans on human rights defenders, and to abolish the "propiska" system.

Amnesty International considers that the real test of the UPR process for Turkmenistan will be whether it leads to changes that have a real impact on the protection of human rights in the country.

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