

EXTERNAL

AI Index: EUR 46/29/97

UA 376/97

Fear of forcible repatriation

28 November 1997

**RUSSIAN** **Nazar Toyliievich Soyunov, former Deputy Prime Minister of Turkmenistan, aged 61**

---

Nazar Soyunov, a former parliamentarian and government minister of Turkmenistan, is apparently facing imminent and forcible repatriation to Turkmenistan after being detained in Russia for questioning. If returned to Turkmenistan, Amnesty International fears that Nazar Soyunov would be at risk of grave violation of his human rights, specifically the bringing of fabricated criminal charges to punish him for his opposition to the government and President of Turkmenistan, and torture and ill-treatment.

Nazar Soyunov has worked in Russia, albeit without any formal legal status there, as a gas and oil consultant at the Russian Scientific Research Institute and at the Russian State Duma (parliament) since he left the government of Turkmenistan in 1995. From 1991 to 1995 Nazar Soyunov held very senior posts in the Turkmen government, serving as Deputy Head of State, Deputy Head of Government and Presidential Adviser.

On 26 November 1997 he was detained in Moscow by officers of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) and questioned for four hours about criminal charges brought against him in Turkmenistan. He was released by the FSB reportedly because of insufficient evidence against him. He has since gone into hiding.

Amnesty International has learned that President Niyazov of Turkmenistan personally requested Nazar Soyunov's extradition, claiming that he was facing charges of corruption in Turkmenistan. Nazar Soyunov and his supporters claim that these charges have been fabricated in order to punish him for an interview he gave to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty on 24 October 1997 in which he criticized the present policies and practices of the Turkmen government and the Turkmen President. Following the broadcast of the interview the official press in Turkmenistan reported that a criminal case had been opened against Nazar Soyunov and that a warrant had been issued for his arrest. Sources close to Nazar Soyunov reported on 21 November 1997 that officials of the General Procuracy and the National Security Committee (KNB) of Turkmenistan had arrived in Moscow to search for him. Treaties on cooperation in law enforcement between Turkmenistan and Russia apparently allow for criminal suspects to be extradited without facing a formal hearing at which objections to extradition by the person concerned or their legal representative can be considered.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Since becoming independent in 1991, Turkmenistan has developed a political climate which stifles fundamental human rights. Turkmenistan is led by President Saparmurad Niyazov, who uses the formal title "Turkmenbashi" - "Leader of the Turkmens". A cult of personality has been openly developed around him, and a state ideology known as "leaderism" has been implemented. Opposition parties and movements are prevented from acquiring legal status and operating openly by a combination of bureaucratic obstruction and overt official pressure, and most leading opposition activists have gone into exile. 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 continues to monitor a pattern of human rights violations by the Turkmenistan government. These include the sentencing of government opponents to long prison terms following conviction of apparently fabricated criminal offences; the arrest and ill-treatment of people involved in organized or spontaneous anti-government protests; apparently unwarranted incarceration of opposition activists in psychiatric hospitals; ill-treatment by police in prisons; and extensive use of the death penalty.

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

- urging the authorities not to extradite Nazar Soyunov to Turkmenistan, as there are serious grounds to believe that he will be at risk of grave human rights violations there;
- noting that agreements between countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States permit Russia to refuse extradition if there are fears that a person whose extradition is requested will face human rights violations.

**APPEALS TO:**

1. The Procurator General of Russia, Yury SKURATOV

Rossiyskaya Federatsiya  
103793 g. Moskva K-31  
Ul. B. Dimitrovka, d.15a  
Prokuratura Rossiyskoy Federatsii  
Generalnomu prokuroru SKURATOVU Yu.

**Telegrams: Procurator General Skuratov, Moscow, Russia**

**Faxes: +7 095 292 88 48 or +7 095 925 18 79**

**Salutation: Dear Procurator General**

2. Chairman of State Duma committee for International Affairs,

Vladimir LUKIN  
Rossiyskaya Federatsiya  
103009 g. Moskva  
Okhotny ryad, 1  
Gosudarstvennaya Duma Rossiyskoy Federatsii  
Komitet po mezhdunarodnym delam  
Predsedatelyu LUKINU V.

**Telegrams: Vladimir Lukin, Duma, Moscow, Russia**

**Faxes: +7 095 292 53 58**

**Salutation: Dear Chairman**

**COPIES TO:**

President of the Russian Federation, Boris Nikolayevich YELTSIN

Rossiyskaya Federatsiya  
g. Moskva, Kreml  
Prezidentu Rossiyskoy Federatsii YELTSINU B.N.

**Faxes: (Press office) +7 095 206 51 73**

Head of the Directorate of International Humanitarian Co-operation and Human Rights Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

Timouraz Otarovich RAMISHVILI  
Rossiyskaya Federatsiya  
121019 g. Moskva  
Vosdvizhenka, 9  
Ministerstvo inostrannykh del

Direktoru Departamenta po mezhdunarodnomu gumanitarnomu i kulturnomy  
sotrudnichestvu RAMISHVILI. T.O.

**Faxes: +7 095 290 08 65**

and to diplomatic representatives of RUSSIA accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat,  
or your section office, if sending appeals after 15 January 1998.