

EXTERNAL

AI Index: EUR 61/03/97

EXTRA 44/97

Fear of imminent execution

27 March 1997

TURKMENISTAN

Akhmed Sarygulov

Yagshirmurad (surname unkown)

Armen Nersisyan

(in cyrillic _____, _____, _____
)

Amnesty International fears that the three men named above face imminent execution in Turkmenistan, having been sentenced to death for murder and banditry around 18 March 1997 by the Supreme Court of Turkmenistan with no right of appeal. Their only hope now of avoiding execution is a petition for clemency to the President of Turkmenistan.

Death penalty cases in Turkmenistan known to Amnesty International suggest that the period from the passing of sentence, through the stages of appeal and petition for clemency to execution can be very short. In one such case known to Amnesty International, that of three men sentenced to death in November 1992, the process of appealing and then petitioning for clemency was exhausted in less than four weeks, and they were executed in December of that year.

There are few details available on these three men. They were reportedly leaders of an armed criminal gang and their crimes included at least two murders and the theft of military weapons. Armen Nersisyan is an ethnic Armenian and the other two appear to be ethnically Turkmen.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases and without reservation, on the grounds that it is a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Amnesty International is appealing to the President of Turkmenistan to exercise his constitutional authority to commute these death sentences.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

To Amnesty International's knowledge, the Criminal Code of Turkmenistan retains the death penalty for 18 peacetime offences. Information about its application is meagre in the absence of any published official statistics, although a Turkmen government publication *Isker* (Warrior) from the end of January-beginning of February 1997 wrote that, according to official statistics in the second half of 1996, 59 people were executed, most for drug trafficking. In another media report published in Kyrgyzstan it was reported that 123 people had been executed in Turkmenistan during 1996 for the offence of drug trafficking. This figure was attributed to official sources in Turkmenistan. Statistics for executions for other offences were not known. Amnesty International wrote to the authorities in Turkmenistan to seek further information on these figures, but has not had a reply to date. The organization also heard from unofficial sources that six men, whose names are not known to Amnesty International, were reportedly sentenced to death by Akhal Regional Court for drug trafficking at the beginning of March 1997. Execution is by shooting.

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

- expressing sympathy for the victims of crime and their families, but pointing out that the death penalty has never been shown to deter crime more effectively than other punishments, and is brutalizing to all in its application;

- urging the President to use his constitutional authority and commute the death sentences passed on these three men, and all other death sentences that come before him;
- urging that a moratorium be imposed on death sentences and executions pending a comprehensive review of the death penalty.

APPEALS TO:

President of Turkmenistan, Saparmurad Atayevich Niyazov

Turkmenistan

744000 g. Ashgabat

Apparat Prezidenta

Prezidentu Turkmenistana

NIYAZOVU S.A.,

Faxes: +993 1 25 51 12

(until 31 March 1997 the code 7 3632 may also be used)

Telegrams: Prezident Niyazov, 744000 Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

Salutation: Dear President Niyazov

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Chairman of the Clemency Commission of the Turkmenistan

Majlis (parliament), name unknown

Turkmenistan

g. Ashgabat

Komissiya po voprosam pomilovaniya Majlisa Turkmenistana

Predsedatelyu

Chairman of the Supreme Court of Turkmenistan, Ysa Rakhmanov

Turkmenistan

744000 Ashgabat

prospekt Saparmurad Turkmenbashi, 18

Verkhovny Sud Turkmenistana

Predsedatelyu RAKHMANOVU Y.

Director of the Institute of Human Rights and the Democratization of Society and the State under the Turkmenistan Majlis, name unknown

Turkmenistan

g. Ashgabat

Institut prav cheloveka i demokratizatsii

obshchestva i gosudarstva pri Majlise Turkmenistana

Direktoru

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, Boris Shikhmyradov

Turkmenistan

744000 g. Ashgabat

pr. Magtymguly, 83

Ministerstvo inostrannykh del Turkmenistana

Ministru SHIKHMYRADOVU B.

Tel: (993 1) 25 49 19; 35 16 66

Fax: (993 1) 51 14 30

(until 31 March 1997 the code 7 3632 may also be used)

Telex: 116338 ULKE SU

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 24 April 1997.