

# URGENT ACTION

## FREELANCE JOURNALIST'S WHEREABOUTS UNKNOWN

**Freelance journalist Saparmamed Nepeskuliev, whose current whereabouts are unknown, is believed to have been held incommunicado by Turkmenistani authorities for a month. His likely arrest and detention may be linked to his work as a freelance journalist. He is at risk of torture or other ill-treatment and an unfair trial.**

**Saparmamed Nepeskuliev** went missing on 7 July in the city of Turkmenbashi, as he was returning to the city of Balkanabad, where he lives. He had been on a trip to gather information and photographs for his work as a freelance journalist for Alternative News Turkmenistan (ATN) and Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty's Turkmen Service. Both media outlets are banned in Turkmenistan. Saparmamed Nepeskuliev had called his family to say that he would be returning to Balkanabad at 4pm on 7 July, but he never arrived.

Saparmamed Nepeskuliev's family reportedly later learned that he had been detained by police for possession of pills containing narcotic substances (thought to be the prescription drug Tramadol) and was being held in the village of Akdash. His family attempted to visit him in detention but were denied a visit. He has not been given access to a lawyer and his current whereabouts are unknown. ATN and Radio Free Europe have not been able to speak to Saparmamed Nepeskuliev and have not had any contact with his family since 30 July. They believe the family may have been threatened by the security officials into not speaking about the situation. Incommunicado detention, without access to a lawyer and to the family, increases the risk of torture and other ill treatment. Saparmamed Nepeskuliev is also at risk of an unfair trial.

Saparmamed Nepeskuliev is likely to have been targeted for his activities as a journalist and civil society activist. Since starting work for Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty's Turkmen Service as a photojournalist earlier this year, Saparmamed Nepeskuliev had filed reports drawing attention to the contrast between poor living conditions for ordinary Turkmenistani citizens and luxury apartment developments. Colleagues at ATN, with whom he also started working earlier this year, believe that he had been under surveillance by the authorities for some time.

### **Please write immediately in Turkmen, Russian or English or your own language:**

- Urging the authorities to immediately establish or reveal Saparmamed Nepeskuliev's whereabouts to his family, and ensure his safety, including ensuring that he is not subjected to torture and other ill treatment;
- Calling on them to ensure that should Saparmamed Nepeskuliev be in their custody, he is given immediate access to a lawyer of his choice, and is charged with a recognisable criminal offence or otherwise immediately released.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 17 SEPTEMBER 2015 TO:**

#### President of Turkmenistan

Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov  
 Presidential Palace  
 744000 Ashgabat  
 Turkmenistan  
 Fax: +993 12 93 5112 (please continue  
 to try between 10-1500 GMT)  
**Salutation: Dear President**

#### Prosecutor General

Amanmyrat Hallyev  
 Prokuratura Turkmenistana  
 ul. Seidi 4  
 744000 g. Ashgabat  
 Turkmenistan  
**Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General**

#### **And copies to:**

Minister of Foreign Affairs  
 Rashid Meredov  
 Archabil av. 108  
 744000 Ashgabat  
 Turkmenistan

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:**

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
 INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

#### Freedom of expression and association

Turkmenistan is a country closed to independent human rights monitors, while Turkmenistani human rights activists and journalists, both within the country and in exile, face consistent pressure from the Turkmenistani authorities. No genuinely independent media exist within the country, and de facto censorship is extensive. People are barred from subscribing to foreign media outlets and access to the internet is monitored and restricted. Social networking websites are frequently blocked. Independent journalists and human rights defenders continue to suffer harassment by the authorities.

#### Torture and other ill-treatment

In spite of the government's tight control of information, credible reports of torture and other ill-treatment by law enforcement officials against people suspected of criminal offences have continued. Torture methods included pulling of the genitals with pliers, electric shocks, and beatings with chair legs and plastic bottles filled with water. Reports on ill-treatment in prisons included a prisoner being forced to swallow pills and having threats made against his family; incidents of forced rape between prisoners; and shackling of prisoners serving life sentences.

Name: Saparmamed Nepeskuliev

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 174/15 Index: EUR 61/2229/2015 Issue Date: 6 August 2015