

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety / Torture or ill-treatment

TURKMENISTAN

**Aili Yklymov (m), aged 20
Esenaman Yklymov (m), aged 31 - his brother
Davlatgeldi Annannyazov (m), aged 36
Scores of other detainees**

Those named above and scores of others, including men, women and children, were arrested following an attack on the Presidential motorcade on 25 November. The President was unharmed, but the attack has led to a new wave of repression against alleged government critics and their families in Turkmenistan.

The government has called the attack an attempted coup aimed at seizing power and overthrowing the constitutional order. Immediately after the attack, President Niyazov held an extraordinary cabinet meeting at which he blamed four exiled opposition figures for the attack: Saparmurad Yklymov, the former Deputy Minister of Agriculture; Boris Shikhmuradov, the former Foreign Minister; Khudayberdy Orazov, the former head of Turkmenistan's central bank; and Nurmukhamed Khanamov, ex-ambassador to Turkey.

According to official figures, 23 people are currently detained, accused of involvement in the attack. However, unofficial sources claim that more than one hundred have been arrested. Amnesty International is concerned at reports that many of those detained were targeted because of their family relations with the four exiled opposition figures named by President Niyazov and with other alleged government critics.

On 26 November, Presidential spokesman Serdar Durdiyev was quoted by *Agence France-Presse* as saying that Saparmurad Yklymov's "entire family is caught up in this." At least 30 of his relatives have reportedly been arrested so far and the whereabouts of most of them are unknown. Saparmurad Yklymov's 75-year old mother was evicted from her house in the capital Ashgabat shortly before midnight on 27 November and the property confiscated. Saparmurad Yklymov told Amnesty International: "It is virtually impossible to find out where most of my relatives are kept. I am very worried that they may be tortured."

Saparmurad Yklymov's uncle Oraz Yklymov told Amnesty International: "I received information from reliable sources on 5 December that my 20-year old son Aili was beaten up so severely in the basement of the former KGB building in Ashgabat that he is unable to walk." Aili has reportedly not received treatment for his injuries. Oraz Yklymov's 31-year old son Esenaman was reportedly ill-treated while in custody following his first arrest on 25 November. He was released the next day, but was reportedly unable to hold a pen in order to write. Esenaman Yklymov was rearrested on 28 November.

Davlatgeldi Annannyazov, the brother of former political prisoner Gulgeldi Annannyazov, was detained on 30 November in Ashgabat. He was reportedly ill-treated by agents of the Security Service. Gulgeldi Annannyazov told Amnesty International from exile in Norway: "When they detained Davlatgeldi the officers beat him and ridiculed him in front of his wife and children. Then they took him to the Interior Ministry and beat him there. I received information that they ill-treated him to force him to denounce me and that they recorded his words on a tape recorder." It is feared that many other detainees share a similar fate.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Central Asian state of Turkmenistan became independent following the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991. Since then it has been dominated by President Saparmurad Niyazov, who has exercised a monopoly

on power as both head of state and head of government. The government is intolerant of dissent, restricting political and civil liberties and retaining tight control of the media. Numerous senior officials were demoted, dismissed or imprisoned in Turkmenistan this year in what appeared to be a politically motivated purge. In many cases, civil society activists, supporters and alleged supporters of the opposition, and their relatives faced harassment and threats by the security service. Numerous members and supporters of opposition groups are reportedly barred from leaving or entering the country. Protest against the regime has grown more vocal in recent years. Several senior officials defected this and last year, including Boris Shikhmuradov, Khudayberdy Orazov and Nurmukhamed Khanamov. Clandestine mass disseminations of anti-government leaflets were reported from Ashgabat and the Northern city of Dashoguz in August and October respectively.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, Russian, Turkmen or your own language:

- expressing concern at allegations that Aili and Esenaman Yklymov as well as Davlatgeldi Annannyyazov were ill-treated in custody following their arrests;
- urging the authorities to conduct prompt and impartial investigations into these allegations, and that if the allegations are substantiated those responsible be brought to justice;
- expressing concern at allegations that many of those detained following the 25 November attack were targeted solely because of their family ties with exiled opposition figures;
- urging the authorities to make public the names of all detainees arrested in connection with the attack, their whereabouts, and what they have been charged with;
- urging the authorities to ensure that those detained have prompt and continuous access to legal counsel, are not subjected to torture or ill-treatment, and that the detainees are either charged with a recognizable offence or released.

APPEALS TO (Please note that it may be difficult to send faxes. If a voice answers during office hours, repeat 'fax' until connected; fax machines may be switched off outside office hours four hours ahead of GMT; if your fax does not go through, please send it by post):

President of Turkmenistan, Saparmurad Atayevich NIYAZOV
Turkmenistan; 744000 g. Ashgabat; Apparat Prezidenta; Prezidentu Turkmenistana NIYAZOVU S.A.;
TURKMENISTAN

Telegrams: Turkmenistan, 744000 Ashgabat, Prezidentu

Faxes: + 993 12 35 51 12 / 51 17 55

Salutation: Dear President,

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, Rashit Ovezgeldiyevich MEREDOV
Turkmenistan; 744000 g. Ashgabat; pr. Magtymguly, 83; Ministerstvo inostrannykh del Turkmenistana;
Ministru MEREDOVU R.; TURKMENISTAN

Telegrams: Turkmenistan, 744000 Ashgabat, Ministru inostrannykh del

Faxes: + 993 12 35 42 41

Salutation: Dear Minister,

COPIES TO:

Procurator General of Turkmenistan, Gurbanbibi ATAJANOVA
Turkmenistan; g. Asghabat; ul. Seidi, 4; Prokuratura Turkmenistana; Generalnomu prokuroru;
ATAJANOVOY G.

Telegrams: Turkmenistan, Ashgabat, Generalnomu prokuroru

Faxes: + 993 12 35 44 82

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 17 January 2003.