

**PUBLIC**

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**Further Information on UA 04/03 (EUR 61/001/2003, 7 January 2003) and follow-up (EUR 61/008/2003) - Prisoner of Conscience / Unfair Trial / Fear of Torture**

**TURKMENISTAN      Farid Tukhbatullin (m), aged 41, civil society activist and co-chair of the Ecological Club**

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Prisoner of conscience Farid Tukhbatullin has been released, and is now reunited with his family. His release came as the result of immense international pressure, including letters sent by members of the Urgent Action network.

Farid Tukhbatullin had been serving a three-year prison sentence, imposed after an unfair trial in March 2003. He was released from the detention facilities of the Ministry of National Security in the capital Ashgabat at around 7.30pm on 2 April, in accordance with a presidential order that had been broadcast on television the previous day.

His passport was returned to him on 4 April, and on 5 April Farid Tukhbatullin flew to his hometown of Dashoguz near the Turkmen-Uzbek border.

Prior to his release, Farid Tukhbatullin had to sign a "confession", repenting his "guilt" and promising not to engage in any "illegal activity" in the future. On 2 April the "confession" was published in Turkmen newspapers. Throughout his pre-trial detention and in court Farid Tukhbatullin had insisted that he was innocent. Amnesty International considered him a prisoner of conscience.

**BACKGROUND**

Farid Tukhbatullin is the co-chair of the Ecological Club in Dashoguz. He had been detained since 23 December 2002, charged with illegally crossing the border from Uzbekistan into Turkmenistan and of concealing a serious criminal act.

The latter charge concerns Farid Tukhbatullin's attendance of an international conference organized by human rights organizations, which was devoted to rights issues ranging from freedom of expression to the rights of the child. Farid Tukhbatullin was accused of refusing to disclose information about plans of exiled opposition groups to carry out an armed coup which, according to the authorities, were discussed at the conference. Amnesty International and other human rights organizations – whose delegates attended the conference – stated that discussions at the conference forum did not include the violent overthrow of the government. Amnesty International regarded Farid Tukhbatullin as a prisoner of conscience, arrested and imprisoned solely to punish him for his peaceful activities as a civil society activist.

In a meeting on 3 March in Ashgabat with Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, the chair-in-office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Turkmen President Saparmurad Niyazov had promised that Farid Tukhbatullin "will be released soon". The next day Farid Tukhbatullin was sentenced to three years' imprisonment in an unfair trial.

**No further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.**