

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety/fear of torture

TURKMENISTAN

Serdar Chariyarov (m), former government deputy minister

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Serdar Chariyarov, the former Turkmen First Deputy Minister of Defence, Chief of General Staff and Head of the Air Force, is believed to be under investigation in connection with his alleged involvement in an armed attack on the President in November 2002. The whereabouts of Serdar Chariyarov are unknown and it is feared he may be in danger of being tortured.

Serdar Chariyarov was sacked from his posts in the Ministry of Defence at a meeting on 26 May 2003 conducted by President Saparmurad Niyazov. During the meeting, he was accused of involvement in the 25 November 2002 attack on the President, as well as of "having looted property of the armed forces". Redzhepbay Arazov, the Minister of Defence, claimed that Serdar Chariyarov was in contact with the opposition activists that the authorities have claimed were behind the attack. He also stated that Serdar Chariyarov had offered them the support of the armed forces in order to overthrow the government. As "proof" of these claims, Redzhepbay Arazov referred to the "confessions" of two men who were sentenced to long prison terms in connection with the armed attack following grossly unfair trials in December 2002 and January 2003. Their "confessions" were allegedly extracted under torture.

President Saparmurad Niyazov stated at the 26 May meeting that a special commission, headed by the Procurator General, had been set up to investigate the allegations against Serdar Chariyarov. Other members of the commission include the Minister of Defence, the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of National Security, as well as the first Deputy Minister of Justice. The President indicated that the commission should come to a conclusion within 25 days.

Serdar Chariyarov's current whereabouts are unknown, and it is feared that he may have been detained in connection with the allegations against him. Amnesty International has received several reports of the torture and ill-treatment of others detained after the 25 November attack.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The human rights situation in Turkmenistan has been appalling for years. Since Turkmenistan became independent following the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991, the country has been dominated by President Saparmurad Niyazov, who has proclaimed himself Turkmenbashi (Father of all Turkmen) and who is also President for Life. The November 2002 attack on the President, which left him unharmed, triggered a new wave of repression in the country. Immediately after the attack the authorities began to detain scores of men, women and children. Many were apparently targeted by the authorities because of their family relationship with known or perceived government opponents. Fifty-nine people have been sentenced in grossly unfair trials to between five years' imprisonment and life imprisonment for their alleged involvement in the attack. Many of those detained were reportedly tortured or ill-treated to force them to "confess" to their involvement in the attack or to incriminate their relatives and others. There have been reports that those convicted continued to be tortured and ill-treated after the close of the trials.

Professor Emmanuel Decaux, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's (OSCE) Rapporteur on Turkmenistan, called on the international community to urgently address the serious human rights situation in the country. According to his report on the aftermath of the attack, "[a]ny new delay in taking action would not only be a moral abdication but also a collective complicity." On 16 April 2003 the United Nations Commission on Human Rights adopted a resolution expressing grave concern about human rights violations in Turkmenistan. With regard to the investigation into the 25 November 2002 attack, the

resolution, “deplores ... [the] conduct of the Turkmen authorities with regard to the lack of fair trials of the accused, the reliance on confessional evidence which may have been extracted by torture or the threat of torture, [and] the closed court proceedings [...]” Amnesty International believes it is essential that the international community build on these initiatives and commit themselves to long-term engagement with regard to human rights in Turkmenistan.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Serdar Charyarov;
- calling for assurances that Serdar Charyarov will not be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;
- calling on the authorities to reveal Serdar Charyarov's whereabouts, and if he is detained, to ensure that he has access to a lawyer of his own choice; and to reveal details of any charges he is facing;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that the investigation into Serdar Charyarov's alleged involvement in the 25 November 2002 attack and other allegations are conducted in line with international human rights standards.

**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

**Telegram:** Turkmenistan, 744000 Ashgabat, Prezidentu  
**Fax:** + 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

**Telegram:** Turkmenistan, 744000 Ashgabat, Ministru inostrannykh del  
**Fax:** + 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.

**Fax:** + 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 8 July 2003.