

PUBLIC

**AI Index: EUR 61/019/2007
14 August 2007**

Further Information on UA 174/07 (EUR 61/015/2007, 05 July 2007) and follow-ups (EUR 61/016/2007, 23 July 2007; EUR 61/017/2007, 26 July 2007) – Prisoners of conscience

TURKMENISTAN

Bayram Ashirgeldiev (m), aged 20

Nuryagdy Gairov (m), aged 27

Aleksandr Zuev (m), aged 27

Suleiman Udaev (m), aged 24

Suleiman Udaev was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment on 7 August. Amnesty International regards him as a prisoner of conscience, jailed solely to punish him for refusing to serve in the army on religious grounds. The situation of the three other Jehovah's Witnesses is believed to be unchanged.

Suleiman Udaev is now known to have been jailed by a district court in the city of Mary, for "evasion of call-up to military service" (Article 219, part 1 of the Criminal Code of Turkmenistan). Reportedly, he had no legal representation. During the hearing the judge reportedly made fun of Suleiman Udaev's religious beliefs that precluded him from serving in the army. The judge reportedly said: "The Bible is not a complete book and maybe God forgot to write that you need to join the army and defend your country. You should change your mind and serve in the army."

Following the hearing he was taken to a detention facility in the city of Mary. On 13 August his relatives were allowed to visit him for the first time since the trial. Suleiman Udaev has lodged an appeal against the sentence.

A supporter of Suleiman Udaev in Turkmenistan told Amnesty International on 14 August: "We want that the whole world knows about this and that he will be released soon."

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

- expressing concern that Suleiman Udaev was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment by a court in Mary on 7 August to punish him for his conscientious objection to military service;
- pointing out that Amnesty International considers Suleiman Udaev and anyone else detained or imprisoned solely because they have refused to serve in the army on conscientious grounds to be a prisoner of conscience and calls for their prompt and unconditional release;
- stating that Amnesty International calls for the suspended sentences handed down to conscientious objectors Nuryagdy Gairov, Bayram Ashirgeldiev and Aleksandr Zuev to be revoked;
- calling on the authorities to introduce legislation to ensure that a civilian alternative of non-punitive length is available to all those whose conscientiously held beliefs preclude them from performing military service.

APPEALS TO:

Kurbanguly Berdymuhammedov
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Presidential Administration
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TURKMENISTAN

Fax: +993 12 355112

Salutation: Dear President Berdymuhammedov

Rashid Meredov
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Magtymkuli ave., 85
744000 Ashgabat
TURKMENISTAN

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Email: mfatm@online.tm

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Shirin Akhmedova
Director of the Turkmen National Institute of Democracy and Human Rights

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PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 25 September 2007.*****