

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 238/07 (EUR 61/021/2007, 7 September 2007) – Prisoner of conscience

TURKMENISTAN

Begench Shakhmuradov (m)

Jehovah's Witness Begench Shakhmuradov was given a suspended two-year prison sentence by Azatlyk District Court in the capital, Ashgabat, on 12 September, for "evasion of call-up to military service". He had refused to serve in the army on religious grounds.

He is believed to have had a number of conditions imposed on his freedom of movement. The exact conditions that apply in his case are not known but they are likely to include needing special permission when he wants to travel outside Ashgabat and a 10pm curfew.

Amnesty International knows of a total of five Jehovah's Witnesses who have been convicted in Turkmenistan to punish them for their conscientious objection to military service in recent months. All received suspended sentences, or had prison sentences commuted to suspended sentences on appeal. All are subject to a number of conditions, including restrictions on their movement. (See UA 174/07, EUR 61/015/2007, 5 July 2007 and follow-ups.)

No further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals. Amnesty International will continue to campaign for the restrictions placed on Begench Shakhmuradov to be lifted.*****