

URGENT ACTION

FORMER GOVERNMENT MINISTER DETAINED

On 5 October, former government minister Geldimurat Nurmuhammedov was detained and sent to a drug rehabilitation centre in Turkmenistan, where he may be subjected to forced medical treatment. Amnesty International is concerned that his detention may be punishment for his criticism of the Turkmenistani authorities.

On 5 October, **Geldimurat Nurmuhammedov**, born in 1952, was detained in Ashgabat, capital of Turkmenistan. He was transferred to a drug rehabilitation centre in the province of Dashoguz – 600km from the capital, in northern Turkmenistan – for up to six months of medical treatment. Amnesty International's research has revealed no evidence that Geldimurat Nurmuhammedov has any history of drug use. Geldimurat Nurmuhammedov may have been targeted for his political activities and criticism of the Turkmenistan government, as he has been previously. In December 2011, in an interview with the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Turkmen service, he criticized the Turkmenistan government for the absence of democracy and human rights in the country and called the ruling Democratic Party of Turkmenistan an "unlawful institution". The construction company owned by Geldimurat Nurmuhammedov's family was closed by the authorities, several days after the interview. Before the interview, the company had not experienced any problems with the tax and financial authorities.

On 11 January 2012, the law on political parties was adopted by the Parliament of Turkmenistan, formally legalising the formation of political parties. However, Turkmenistani human rights defenders and opposition political activists in exile have expressed doubts about the application of the law and the willingness of the authorities to allow open political debate. On 21 August, the Party of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs was established; this is the first time an alternative to the ruling Turkmenistan Democratic Party has been permitted since 1991.

Geldimurat Nurmuhammedov served as Minister of Tourism and Culture in Turkmenistan from 1992 to 1995. Before his detention, he worked as a lawyer, advising international companies.

Please write immediately in Turkmen, Russian, English or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to ensure that Geldimurat Nurmuhammedov is not subjected to forced medical treatment;
- Calling on them to investigate the legality of Geldimurat Nurmuhammedov's detention and the allegations that he may have been targeted because of his political views;
- Reminding them to ensure that everyone is able to peacefully exercise their right to freedom of expression and association in conformity with Turkmenistan's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 7 DECEMBER 2012 TO:

President

Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov
 Presidential Palace
 744000 Ashgabat
 Turkmenistan
 Fax: +993 12 93 5112 (please keep trying between
 10 am and 3 pm GMT)

Salutation: Dear President

Minister of Interior

Isgender Mulikov
 Ul. 2033 (pr. Mahtumkuli) 85
 744000 Ashgabat
 Turkmenistan
 Fax: +993 12 39 1944 (please keep trying between
 10 am and 3 pm GMT)

Salutation: Dear Minister

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
 INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In Turkmenistan human rights defenders and other civil society activists are unable to operate openly. In recent years, Amnesty International has received credible reports of harassment, torture and other ill-treatment, arbitrary detention and imprisonment after unfair trials of human rights defenders and other activists, independent journalists, individuals who are critical of the authorities and former government officials. The authorities closely monitor communication channels, such as telephone lines and the internet. Human rights defenders have told Amnesty International that they believe that the authorities monitor their communications to prevent information about human rights violations reaching international human rights organizations and media.

Journalists working with foreign media outlets known to publish criticism of the authorities frequently face harassment, intimidation and arbitrary detention. Many journalists report that the authorities often disconnect their telephone lines, and the relatively small number with private internet access report frequent disruptions to the service. The authorities have on many occasions attempted to silence correspondents of the US Congress-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, which is often critical of the authorities in Turkmenistan and has broadcast human rights concerns.

Critical media reporting is very rarely tolerated. Independent civil society activists are unable to operate openly and some are forced to live in exile. Fear for dissidents' safety was heightened in September 2010 when President Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov called on the Ministry of National Security to fight those who, according to the government website, "defame our democratic law based secular state and try to destroy the unity and solidarity of our society."

Name: Geldimurat Nurmammedov

Gender m/f: m

UA: 318/12 Index: EUR 61/005/2012 Issue Date: 26 October 2012