

URGENT ACTION

GAY MAN SUMMONED BY POLICE AND DISAPPEARED

Kasymberdi Garaev, a 24-year-old doctor, came out as gay in an online article published by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Turkmen Service on 21 October. He spoke of his despair as same sex relations between men are a crime in Turkmenistan. He was summoned to a police station on 24 October and has not been heard of since. Meanwhile, the authorities have started a campaign to identify supposed LGBTI people.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Raşit Meredow, Minister of Foreign Affairs

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Turkmenistan

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Dear Minister,

*I am deeply concerned about the fate and whereabouts of **Kasymberdi Garaev**, a 24-year-old doctor, who has not been heard of since 24 October when he went to a police station in the capital Ashgabat following police summons. On 21 October, in an interview with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Turkmen Service, Kasymberdi Garaev came out as a gay man, and spoke of his experience of arrest and torture and other ill-treatment by police officers in 2018.*

In the absence of any further information about Kasymberdi Garaev's fate and whereabouts, considering his allegations of arbitrary arrest and torture in 2018, and considering that Turkmenistan treats gay men as criminals, I am concerned about his life.

Turkmenistan has obligations under international human rights law not to arbitrarily deprive anyone of their liberty, or under any circumstances to subject them to torture and other ill-treatment. In addition, no-one should be discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation, real or perceived, and consensual same-sex relationships should not be considered a criminal offence.

I urge you to raise this case with the Prosecutor General and ensure that:

- The fate and whereabouts of Kasymberdi Garaev are urgently disclosed, and that if he is under state custody, he is immediately and unconditionally released and protected from torture and other ill-treatment;*
- Any allegations of torture and other ill-treatment are promptly, effectively and thoroughly investigated;*
- All necessary steps are taken to ensure the safety of those who may be at risk in Turkmenistan because of their real or perceived sexual orientation and to condemn in the strongest terms possible any threats made by officials against individuals due to their real or perceived sexual orientation.*

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

People in Turkmenistan live in an environment in which human rights violations are severe and routine. The right to freedom of expression is harshly restricted and all media are controlled by the state. Torture and other ill-treatment is believed to be widespread, and prisoners are held in conditions amounting to inhuman and degrading treatment, and in some cases subjected to enforced disappearances. Deaths in custody are commonplace and not subject to investigation.

Consensual same-sex relations between men are a criminal offence in Turkmenistan punishable by up to two years' imprisonment. Widespread societal homophobia and transphobia means that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons are at high risk of torture or other ill-treatment, including sexual violence, and extortion at the hands of the police. They also come under severe pressure from their families who seek to protect the "family honour" by imposing forced marriages.

Since Kasymberdi Garaev's story was made public the Turkmen authorities have started to try to identify LGBTI people working in public institutions. There are reports that health officials have been ordered to identify LGBTI people by testing for sexually transmitted diseases.

In his interview, Kasymberdi Garaev revealed that in 2018 he was detained by police officers after he started corresponding with a man on the internet who turned out to be a police informer. While in police custody, he was tortured with an electric baton. He was released from custody after the intervention of a relative. Since his release, his family had attempted to force him into marriage to conceal his sexual orientation.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Russian, English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 18 December 2019

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Kasymberdi Garaev (he/him)