

PUBLIC

AI Index: EUR 61/001/2001

8 January 2001

Further information on UA 07/00 (EUR 61/01/00, 11 January 2000) and follow-up (EUR 61/04/00, 28 February 2000 ; EUR 61/08/00, 21 March 2000) - Fear for safety / Incommunicado detention / Prisoner of conscience

TURKMENISTANNurberdi NURMAMEDOV, aged 58 ( \_\_\_\_\_ )

Prisoner of conscience Nurberdi Nurmamedov was released on 23 December under a presidential amnesty to mark the Islamic holy night of Kadir and the end of Ramadan. According to unofficial sources, he returned to his home in the capital, Ashgabat, that day, and is reportedly under strict police surveillance.

Earlier in December Nurberdi Nurmamedov, who is co-chair of the opposition movement *Agzybirlik*, reportedly had to repent on state television, swear an oath of loyalty to President Saparmurad Niyazov and promise to redeem his guilt by working for his "motherland, the Turkmen people and the President."

He had been sentenced to five years' imprisonment in February 2000, reportedly after an unfair trial, on charges of "hooliganism" and "threatening to murder", by Giyaversky district court, in Anau, near Ashgabat. Amnesty International believes that Nurberdi Nurmamedov was imprisoned solely because of his peaceful opposition activities and his open criticism of the Turkmen President.

His son Murad is believed to remain on probation, having undertaken not to leave Ashgabat. He was sentenced at the same trial as his father for "hooliganism committed with offensive weapons". Amnesty International believes that Murad Nurmamedov is being punished for his father's political activity.

According to unofficial sources, Nurberdi Nurmamedov's health suffered badly in prison. Conditions in Turkmenistan's prisons are known to be particularly harsh, and there are allegations that Nurberdi Nurmamedov was ill-treated. When he was transferred from Bezmein prison colony near Ashgabat to the maximum security prison in Krasnovodsk in August, he was reportedly not able to walk unaided, and was carried out of a prison block on a stretcher.

Nurberdi Nurmamedov told Amnesty International that he is grateful to everybody who campaigned for his release. His supporters in exile believe that he would not have been released without pressure from Amnesty International and other international human rights organisations.

Amnesty International is calling on the Turkmen authorities to lift the restrictions imposed on Nurberdi and Murad Nurmamedov.

**No further action is required from the Urgent Action network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.**