

PUBLIC

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Further information on UA 07/00 (EUR 61/01/00, 11 January 2000) - Fear for safety, and new concern: prisoner of conscience / unfair trial / harsh prison conditions

TURKMENISTANNurberdi NURMAMEDOV (_____), aged 57

On 25 February 2000, Nurberdi Nurmamedov was sentenced to five years in prison on charges of "hooliganism". Amnesty International believes that the systematic ill-treatment of prisoners in Turkmenistan and the harsh prison conditions might place Nurberdi Nurmamedov's life in danger.

Nurberdi Nurmamedov, co-chair of the opposition movement *Agzybirlik*, was sentenced by Giyaversky District Court in Anau, near to the capital Ashgabat. His family intend to appeal. His 25-year-old son, Murad Nurmamedov, was sentenced at the same trial to two years' imprisonment on charges of "hooliganism committed with dangerous weapons" (Art. 279.3). He is currently not detained, but on 18 January the police made him sign a written undertaking that he will not leave Ashgabat.

The charges brought against the two men reportedly relate to threats made by Nurberdi Nurmamedov and his son to a long-standing acquaintance during a quarrel over land. The man allegedly threatened by them is reported to have said, however, that it was a verbal dispute only and opposed the criminal charges brought against them.

Amnesty International believes that Nurberdi Nurmamedov is a prisoner of conscience detained solely because of his peaceful opposition activities - he is one of the few opposition figures to openly criticize President Saparmurad Niyazov's policies.

Representatives of foreign embassies and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe who were invited to attend the trial were not given access to the courtroom. Officials claimed it was too full but family members dispute this. In addition Nurberdi Nurmamedov's lawyer reportedly left the courtroom before the case had concluded. Another anomaly of the trial also included a prosecution witness who claimed he was forced to sign an incriminating statement which had been prepared by the prosecutor.

Nurberdi Nurmamedov has reportedly been taken to Tedzhen prison near Ashgabat. He is apparently no longer on hunger strike.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in Russian or in your own language:

- expressing grave concern that Nurberdi Nurmamedov has been sentenced to five years in prison;
- saying that you believe him to be a prisoner of conscience imprisoned solely for his peaceful opposition activities;
- calling for his immediate and unconditional release;
- expressing concern at allegations that he did not receive a fair trial according to international standards;
- urging that he be protected from ill-treatment while in detention.

APPEALS TO: (Please note that fax numbers are difficult to obtain. If a voice answers, repeat 'fax' until connected; otherwise it is advisable to leave your fax machine on auto-redial).

President of Turkmenistan, Saparmurad Atayevich NIYAZOV

Turkmenistan

744000 g. Ashgabat

Apparat Prezidenta

Prezidentu NIYAZOVU S.A.

Turkmenistan

Telegrams: Prezidentu Niyazovu, 744000 Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

Faxes: + 993 12 35 51 12

Salutation: Dear President Niyazov

Procurator General of Turkmenistan, Gurbanbibi ATAYANOVA (Ms)

Turkmenistan

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Generalnomu prokuroru ATAYANOVOY G.

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Salutation: Dear Procurator General

Chairman of the Supreme Court of Turkmenistan, Ysa RAKHMANOV

Turkmenistan

744000 Ashgabat

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Telegrams: Predsedatelyu Rakhmonovu, Verkhovny sud, 744000 Ashgabat,

Turkmenistan

Salutation: Dear Chairman

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Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, Boris SHIKHMYRADOV

Turkmenistan

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and to diplomatic representatives of Turkmenistan accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 11 April 2000.