

URGENT ACTION

INDEPENDENT JOURNALIST TORTURED, FACING JAIL

Journalist Khudayberdy Allashov was detained on 3 December, together with his wife and mother, in Turkmenistan. He is accused of possessing chewing tobacco, which is a criminal offence, and faces up to seven years in prison if convicted. His mother also remains in detention.

Independent Turkmenistani journalist **Khudayberdy Allashov** was detained along with his mother and wife on 3 December, in Dashoguz province, northern Turkmenistan. According to the information received by Amnesty International, a group of armed law enforcement officials entered their house and found a couple of small sachets of chewing tobacco. It is unclear whether they had a search warrant. The officials carrying out the search beat Khudayberdy Allashov. He and his mother were charged with possessing chewing tobacco. Possession, use, sale, storage, transportation and cultivation of chewing tobacco is illegal in Turkmenistan. Chewing tobacco is commonly consumed in Turkmenistan and it is not known to have led to arrests in the past.

According to the information received by Amnesty International, Khudayberdy Allashov "confessed" to possessing 11 kg of chewing tobacco as a result of being subjected to torture and other ill-treatment. Conviction for this offence can lead to seven years in prison. It is believed that his mother is still in detention, but no additional information is available regarding her situation. His wife was released on 3 December. Several sources have reported that Khudayberdy Allashov, currently held in a basement at Koneurgench city police station, is in a bad health condition, his face swollen and covered with bruises as a result of the beatings.

Khudayberdy Allashov is a contributor to Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty's Turkmen Service. He is likely to have been targeted for his activities as an independent journalist. Khudayberdy Allashov has reported on food shortages, delays in salaries and forced cotton-picking, using the pseudonym Mekan Tashliyev. The authorities are intolerant of any critical reporting from journalists within the country, and have used heavy handed reprisals, including criminal prosecution under trumped-up charges, against those who have dared to do so.

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

- Urging the authorities to drop trumped up charges of possession of 11 kg of chewing tobacco, and to end politically motivated prosecution of Khudayberdy Allashov and his mother;
- Calling on the authorities to investigate the allegations of torture and other ill-treatment of Khudayberdy Allashov and members of his family, and bring those responsible to account in fair trial proceedings;
- Insisting on respect for the right to freedom of expression in Turkmenistan and an end to reprisal for any form of dissent.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 19 JANUARY 2016 TO:

President of Turkmenistan
Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov
Presidential Palace
744000 Ashgabat
Turkmenistan
Fax: +993 12 93 5112 (please continue
to try between 10-1500 GMT)
Salutation: Dear President

Prosecutor General
Amanmyrat Hallyev
Prokuratura Turkmenistana
ul. Seidi 4
744000 g. Ashgabat
Turkmenistan
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

And copies to:
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Rashid Meredov
Archabil av. 108
744000 Ashgabat
Turkmenistan

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR YAZMURAD N. SERDYAEV, Embassy of Turkmenistan, 131 Holland Park Avenue W11 4UT, 020 7610 5239, Fax 020 7751 1903, uk@btconnect.com, www.turkmenembassy.org.uk

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

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

INDEPENDENT JOURNALIST TORTURED, FACING JAIL

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Turkmenistan is a country closed to independent human rights monitors. Turkmenistani human rights defenders and journalists, both within the country and in exile, face consistent pressure from the Turkmenistani authorities. No genuinely independent media exist within the country, and de facto censorship is extensive. People are barred from subscribing to foreign media outlets and access to the internet is monitored and restricted. Social networking websites are frequently blocked. Independent journalists and human rights defenders continue to suffer intimidation and harassment by the authorities.

In spite of the government's tight control of information, credible reports of torture and other ill-treatment by law enforcement officials against people suspected of criminal offences continue. Amnesty International has received information about people being tortured and otherwise ill-treated, including by pulling of the genitals with pliers, electric shocks, and beatings with chair legs and plastic bottles filled with water, a prisoner being forced to swallow pills and having threats made against his family; incidents of forced rape between prisoners; and shackling of prisoners serving life sentences.

UA: 279/16 Index: EUR 61/5295/2016 Issue Date: 8 December 2016