

URGENT ACTION

RELEASED JOURNALIST REMAINS AT RISK

Rovshen Yazmuhamedov, a Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty journalist, was released from detention on 22 May in Turkmenistan after spending more than two weeks in custody. The charges against him are still unclear. It is likely he had been targeted in connection with his work as a journalist.

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) have stated that **Rovshen Yazmuhamedov**, 30, was released in Turkmenabat, eastern Turkmenistan on 22 May. The charges against him have not been disclosed by the authorities. Rovshen Yazmuhamedov's family have stated that he was interrogated by security services several times before his detention.

During his detention he was held in a temporary detention facility run by the department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs who are involved in the fight against organized crime and terrorism. His family reported to RFE/RL that the authorities installed surveillance cameras around their home following the detention of Rovshen Yazmuhamedov on 6 May.

Rovshen Yazmuhamedov has been working with the Turkmen service of RFE/RL since September 2012. He is a correspondent and mainly covers social issues.

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

- ✓ Calling on the authorities to investigate the legality of Rovshen Yazmuhamedov's detention and the allegations that he may have been targeted because of his journalist activities;
- ✓ Urging the authorities to immediately disclose the reasons for his detention and provide details about any charges against him;
- ✓ 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 4 JULY 2013 TO:

President of Turkmenistan

Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov
 Presidential Palace
 744000 Ashgabat
 Turkmenistan
 Fax: +993 12 93 5112 (please keep
 trying between 10-1500 GMT)

Salutation: Dear President

General Prosecutor

Yaranmirat Yazmiradov
 UI 2005 (Seidi) 4
 744000 Ashgabat
 Turkmenistan
Salutation: General Prosecutor

And copies to:

Minister of Interior
 Isgender Mulikov
 UI. 2033 (pr. Mahtumkuli) 85
 744000 Ashgabat
 Turkmenistan
 Fax: +993 12 39 1944 (please keep
 trying between
 10 - 1500 GMT)

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 121/13. Further information:
<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR61/001/2013/en>

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 INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The authorities have on many occasions attempted to silence correspondents of the US Congress-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, which has broadcast on human rights issues. A correspondent with RFE/RL, Ogulsapar Muradova, was detained and died in custody in disputed circumstance in 2006. No effective and independent investigation appears to have been conducted into her death.

Human rights defenders and other civil society activists are unable to operate openly in Turkmenistan. 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 FreeEurope/Radio Liberty, which is often critical of the authorities in Turkmenistan and has broadcast human rights concerns.

In January 2013, a new law on Media Freedom came into force, reportedly guaranteeing Turkmenistani citizens free access to foreign media, and prohibiting censorship. It is not yet known what the effects in practice of this legislation will be in Turkmenistan where 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 heightened in September 2010 when President Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov 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: Rovshen Yazmuhamedov

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 121/13 Index EUR 61/002/2013 Issue Date: 23 May 2013