



FREEDOM NOW

## Submission to the United Nations Human Rights Committee

### List of Issues– Turkmenistan

#### 134<sup>th</sup> session (February-March 2022)

Freedom Now welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the *List of Issues* of the Republic of Turkmenistan (“Turkmenistan”) in preparation for its third periodic review.

#### A. Torture of Detained Persons (Article 7)

Article 33 of Turkmenistan’s Constitution and Article 182(1) of the Criminal Code prohibit torture. However, credible allegations of mistreatment persist in the pre-trial detention and prison systems.<sup>1</sup>

Although the prison system lacks transparency and independent monitoring, former detainees have reported instances of torture and other mistreatment that they faced in Turkmenistan’s detention facilities. Recently, a former prisoner held in a women’s pre-trial detention facility in Yashlyk recently disclosed the torture that she endured for two weeks in the facility. During the evening she was tied to a chair and received numerous electrical shocks. If she fainted, prison authorities revived her by pouring water on her. Her torturers attempted to extract a false confession, claiming at one point they would send her son to an orphanage. The torture only ended when the prisoners’ family transferred money to the prison authorities.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, numerous incidents of torture and ill-treatment have been documented at Ovadan-Depe prison. Former prisoners have reported that officials beat prisoners with so much force that it lifted them off the ground.<sup>3</sup> International NGOs had previously found in 2016 that “[b]eatings are used to initiate prisoners, as a direct order from the President for his imprisoned rivals, for any perceived offense inside the prison, and often for no reason at all.”<sup>4</sup> Officials reportedly assault prisoners with batons, plastic bottles filled with water, and dogs, which has reportedly led to loss of consciousness, damage to kidneys, and an inability to walk.<sup>5</sup> Other forms of reported torture in prisons include the use of “hunchback cells,” which are less than five feet tall; the use of “kartsers,” which are cylindrical dark solitary confinement cells; the absence of air conditioning or insulation in prisons, leading to

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<sup>1</sup> *Report on the Penitentiary System of Turkmenistan*, Rights and Freedoms of Turkmenistan Citizens, on file with author; *see also Penitentiary System*, Turkmen Yurt TV, available at <https://turkmenyurt.tv/category/penitenchiarnaya/>.

<sup>2</sup> *50 days in Turkmen prisons*, Memorial Human Rights Center (April 2, 2021), available at [https://memohrc.org/ru/news\\_old/50-dney-v-turkmenskih-tyurmah-0](https://memohrc.org/ru/news_old/50-dney-v-turkmenskih-tyurmah-0).

<sup>3</sup> *Report on the Penitentiary System of Turkmenistan*, *supra* note 1; *Penitentiary System* *supra* note 1; *Amnesty International Public Statement: Turkmenistan: Free 18 Men Tortured, Sentenced in Unfair Trial*, Amnesty International (June 9, 2017), available at <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/EUR6163602017ENGLISH.pdf>, pg. 4.

<sup>4</sup> *The Ovadan Depe Prison: Medieval Torture in Modern Turkmenistan*, Prove They Are Alive Campaign (2016), available at <http://provetheyarealive.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Final-O-D-Report-September-2014-compressed.pdf>, pg. 16.

<sup>5</sup> *The Ovadan Depe Prison: Medieval Torture in Modern Turkmenistan*, *supra* note 4; *Report on the Penitentiary System of Turkmenistan*, *supra* note 1; *Penitentiary System* *supra* note 1.

temperatures reaching 122 degrees Fahrenheit; and refusal to address insect infestations.<sup>6</sup> There has been no indication that these conditions have improved since their initial reporting.

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<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

## **Recommended Questions to Turkmenistan**

1. *Provide data on how many individuals during the Reporting Period have reported mistreatment, abuse, or torture during their interrogation; how often such reports of mistreatment, abuse and torture were investigated; and the results of such investigations.*
2. *Provide information on the investigations undertaken into complaints of torture and the prosecution and convictions of persons who have committed acts of torture during the Reporting Period.*
3. *Provide data on how often, during the Reporting Period, a judge or judicial officer has allowed into evidence any information where such judge or judicial officer had received a complaint of mistreatment, abuse or torture in connection with the interrogation that produced such information.*
4. *Provide data on any deaths or hospitalizations among detainees which has occurred within each of Turkmenistan's prisons, including how often the cause of such death or hospitalization was investigated; and the results of such investigations.*
5. *Allow regular, unannounced, and independent monitoring of detention facilities. Monitoring visits should include un-surveilled access to detainees as well as detention staff.*
6. *Describe what steps have been taken with respect to the recommendations set forth in paragraphs 19 and 21 of concluding observations on the second periodic report of Turkmenistan adopted by the Human Rights Committee (the "Committee") at its 119<sup>th</sup> session (6-29 March 2017) (the "Concluding Observations").<sup>7</sup>*

### **B. Treatment of prisoners and prison conditions (Articles 7 and 10)**

Living conditions in Turkmen prisons are particularly harsh, characterized by overcrowding and a lack of sanitation.<sup>8</sup> Former prisoners have described prisons as inhumane, dangerous, and life threatening. Independent bodies are not permitted to monitor prisons in Turkmenistan,<sup>9</sup> which makes it difficult to assess conditions.

Several UN treaty bodies, including the recipient of the present submission, have documented the poor conditions in Turkmenistan prisons. The UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights found that prisons in Turkmenistan suffer from high levels of overcrowding and very poor prison conditions.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, while noting the efforts made to renovate and build new prison facilities, the UN Human Rights Committee previously expressed concern about continued reports of inhuman prison conditions, including serious overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, inadequate

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<sup>7</sup> *Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Turkmenistan adopted by the Committee at its 119<sup>th</sup> session (6-29 March 2017)*, UN Human Rights Committee (April 20, 2017), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/TKM/CO/2, ¶¶ 19, 21.

<sup>8</sup> *Amnesty International Public Statement: Turkmenistan: Free 18 Men Tortured, Sentenced in Unfair Trial*, *supra* note 3.

<sup>9</sup> *2020 Human Rights Report: Turkmenistan*, U.S. Department of State, available at <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/turkmenistan/> [hereinafter "2020 U.S. State Dep't Report"].

<sup>10</sup> *Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Turkmenistan adopted by the Committee at its 119<sup>th</sup> session (6-29 March 2017)*, *supra* note 7, pg. 6.

access to drinking water, malnutrition, and exposure to extreme temperatures in the Ovadan-Depe and Turkmenbashi prisons.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, The Committee also noted the failure to separate prisoners suffering from tuberculosis from other inmates, and to provide them with adequate health care. The UN Committee against Torture reported that numerous prisoners might have died because of the conditions at Ovadan-Depe prison and has also expressed concern at “the use of solitary confinement and the reduced regime for persons placed in solitary confinement, which has resulted in mental health problems and suicides.”<sup>12</sup>

Government decisions to reduce state support across various institutions have led to food and medication shortages in detention facilities.<sup>13</sup> Former prisoners have reported that they had to rely on their families to send food, as officials frequently failed to feed them.<sup>14</sup> Prisoners’ relatives report that prison authorities sometimes deny family members access to prisoners and refuse family members from providing some with food, medicine, and other supplies.<sup>15</sup>

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) prisoners face heightened discrimination—former prisoners report that authorities routinely place LGBTI prisoners in life-threatening situations, such as by instigating fights in order for other prisoners to demonstrate their “honor.”<sup>16</sup>

### **Recommended Questions to Turkmenistan**

1. *Provide data on the number of prisoners within each of Turkmenistan’s prisons along with the capacity of such prison.*
2. *Provide information on the state of sanitation, hygiene, temperature conditions, provision of nutritional food and clean water, and visitation rights for each of Turkmenistan’s prisons and any steps that Turkmenistan is taking to ensure that prison conditions meet international standards.*
3. *Provide information on any steps taken to ensure that detainees’ right to release pending trial is respected.*
4. *Please provide information on the use of solitary confinement in Turkmen prisons, including any regulations that specify when a prisoner may be sent to solitary confinement and how long such solitary confinement may last; information on the types of infractions in practice for which prisoners are sent to solitary confinement, the average duration of solitary confinement, and how many prisoners are held in solitary confinement at any given moment; and whether any reports of prison guard abuse of solitary confinement have been investigated.*
5. *Please provide data regarding the incidence and spread of communicable diseases within Turkmenistan’s prisons and any steps that Turkmenistan has taken to safeguard the health of inmates from communicable disease.*

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<sup>11</sup> *Compilation on Turkmenistan: Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (Feb. 26, 2018), available at <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/WG.6/30/TKM/2>, pg. 5.

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> 2020 U.S. State Dep’t Report, *supra* note 9.

<sup>14</sup> *Report on the Penitentiary System of Turkmenistan*, *supra* note 1; *Penitentiary System* *supra* note 1.

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

<sup>16</sup> *Id.*

6. *Describe what steps have been taken with respect to the recommendations set forth in paragraph 23 of the Concluding Observations.*<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Turkmenistan adopted by the Committee at its 119<sup>th</sup> session (6-29 March 2017), supra note 7, ¶ 23.*

### C. Arbitrary Detention (Articles 9 and 14)

In its previous review, this Committee expressed concern about Turkmenistan’s “continuous use of harassment, intimidation, torture and arbitrary arrests, detention and convictions on reportedly politically motivated charges as a retaliation tool.”<sup>18</sup> These tactics remain largely unchanged. Turkmenistan continues to detain its citizens for exercising their fundamental human rights, including the rights to freedom of expression, association, and assembly. In the context of such politically-motivated detentions, the government has failed to meet minimum international due process standards and violated detainees’ rights to be free from torture and other forms of mistreatment. Since Turkmenistan’s previous report, the Committee adopted views regarding the arbitrary detention of two individuals in Turkmenistan—Ogulsapar Muradova and Sapardurdy Khadzhev.<sup>19</sup> The Committee found that by detaining these individuals Turkmenistan committed serious violations of human rights enshrined in the ICCPR, including the right to a fair trial and prohibition against torture. Although both Muradova and Khadzhev have since been released from detention, Turkmenistan has failed to provide an effective remedy in either case. This is especially troubling in the case of Muradova, who died in custody, as the authorities have still not conducted an investigation into the circumstances of her passing.<sup>20</sup>

Other concerning cases of arbitrary detention and politically-motivated prosecutions in Turkmenistan include:

- Nugeldi Halykov, an activist and journalist. In July 2020 he sent an independent news website a photograph that showed members of the visiting World Health Organization delegation in Ashgabat. The next day Halykov disappeared after he was called to a local police station. He was ultimately charged with fraud for failing to repay a debt. He was sentenced to four years in prison in September 2020.<sup>21</sup>
- Khursanai Ismatullaeva, a pediatrician. In July 2017 she was fired after taking a two week trip to St. Petersburg for medical treatment. She challenged this decision through the courts, claiming she had been unfairly terminated because she refused to prescribe unnecessary medicine and treatments, despite orders from her superiors to do so. In July 2021, she was abducted from her home a day after her case was raised in the European Parliament.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Turkmenistan adopted by the Committee at its 119<sup>th</sup> session (6-29 March 2017)*, *supra* note 7, ¶ 42.

<sup>19</sup> *Communication No. 2252/2013*, UN Human Rights Committee (April 6, 2018), CCPR/C/122/D/2252/2013; *Communication No. 2079/2011*, UN Human Rights Committee (May 12, 2015), CCPR/C/113/D/2079/2011.

<sup>20</sup> *Ogulsapar Muradova: After 15 Years, Still No Probe Of Turkmen Journalist's Death In Custody*, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (June 27, 2021), available at <https://www.rferl.org/a/turkmenistan-muradova-death-15-years-unexplained-rferl-hrw/31328294.html>.

<sup>21</sup> *Turkmenistan: Man Gets Four-Year Prison Term for Reposting Photo of WHO Delegation*, Turkmen News (Dec. 14, 2020), available at <https://en.turkmen.news/human-rights/turkmenistan-man-gets-four-year-prison-term-for-reposting-photo-of-who-delegation/>.

<sup>22</sup> *The European Parliament Was Told Of Her Plight. Then This Turkmen Doctor Disappeared*, Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty (July 24, 2021), available at <https://www.rferl.org/a/turkmen-doctor-disappears/31374849.html>.

- Mansur Mingelov, a human rights activist and member of the Baloch ethnic group. He was initially arrested in June 2012 and interrogated about drug charges pending against his brother. While in detention he was forced to witness the torture of his brother. The next day Mingelov lodged a complaint regarding this incident. He also collected evidence of other cases of torture in detention and submitted them to Turkmen authorities and Western governments. In September 2012 he was sentenced to 22 years in prison. Mingelov continues to suffer from serious health issues exacerbated by poor treatment in prison. As recently as October 2021, he has been denied adequate medical treatment.<sup>23</sup> Authorities evicted Mingelov’s family members from their homes in October 2021 in apparent reprisal for informing international media and human rights organizations about his condition.<sup>24</sup>

### **Recommended Questions to Turkmenistan**

1. *Describe what steps have been taken to comply with the views of the Committee concerning Communication No. 2252/2013 regarding Ms. Muradova and Communication No. 2079/2011 regarding Mr. Khadzhev.*
2. *Please describe what steps have been taken to end the imprisonment and/or harassment of individuals who are critical of the government, especially as relates to the detention of Mr. Halykov, Ms. Ismatullaeva, and Mr. Mingelov.*
3. *Please provide data on how many individuals during the Reporting Period have complained before domestic or international mechanisms of arbitrary detention; any domestic investigations undertaken into such complaints; and the results of such investigations.*
4. *Please provide information on any guarantees included in the Tajik Constitution, Penal Code, and any other laws which protect an individual from arbitrary detention.*
5. *Describe what steps have been taken with respect to the recommendations set forth in paragraph 43 of the Concluding Observations.*<sup>25</sup>

### **D. Enforced Disappearances and *Incommunicado* Detention (Articles 9 and 14)**

Arbitrary arrests, *incommunicado* detentions, and enforced disappearances are hallmarks of government repression in Turkmenistan.<sup>26</sup> International human rights organizations have documented 162 cases of enforced disappearances since 2002. Of these, at least 29 individuals have died in custody.<sup>27</sup> The true number of people forcibly disappeared and who have died in custody is likely much higher.

<sup>23</sup> *Rights Activist in Critical Condition in Turkmen Prison*, Turkmen News (Oct. 5, 2021), available at <https://en.turkmen.news/human-rights/mingelov-turkmen-prison/>.

<sup>24</sup> *The authorities of Turkmenistan are evicting the family of Mansur Mingelov from their home*, Turkmenistan Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Oct. 13, 2021), available at <http://www.tmhelsinki.org/ru/modules/news/article.php?storyid=5381>.

<sup>25</sup> *Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Turkmenistan adopted by the Committee at its 119<sup>th</sup> session (6-29 March 2017)*, *supra* note 7, ¶ 43.

<sup>26</sup> *2020 U.S. State Dep’t Report*, *supra* note 9.; see also, *Advancing Freedom & Democracy Reports: Turkmenistan*, U.S. State Department (May 2009) available at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/drl/rls/afdr/2009/sca/122968.htm>.

<sup>27</sup> *List of the Disappeared in Turkmenistan’s Prisons, Prove They Are Alive!* (Dec. 2021), available at [https://provetheyarealive.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Disappeared-in-Turkmenistans-prisons\\_report\\_Prove\\_November-2021\\_final.pdf](https://provetheyarealive.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Disappeared-in-Turkmenistans-prisons_report_Prove_November-2021_final.pdf) [hereinafter “2021 List of the Disappeared in Turkmen Prisons”], pg. 3.

Turkmenistan often does not release any information about arrests and imprisonments to the domestic public, the families of those impacted, and to the international community.<sup>28</sup> The lack of transparency makes it difficult to understand the full scope of enforced disappearances. In a notable example of this practice, Gulgeldy Annaniyazov, a prominent Turkmen political dissident, was abducted and “disappeared” by plainclothes officers in 2008 and supposedly convicted in a closed trial on a number of trumped-up charges.<sup>29</sup> The Turkmen government did not publicly disclose any information about Annaniyazov’s whereabouts and condition for over a decade. In 2019, Annaniyazov was finally allowed to see his family for the first time since his arrest in 2008. Shortly thereafter, authorities moved him from a detention facility to a remote industrial town on the Aral Sea, however he remains under strict government supervision and his movement is restricted.<sup>30</sup> In a more recent case, authorities arrested lawyer Pygambergeldy Allaberdyev in September 2020 and sentenced him to six years in prison after a closed trial. Since that time, his whereabouts remain unknown and the government has not responded to his family’s attempts to secure additional information about his condition.<sup>31</sup>

For years, Turkmen authorities responded to international pressure on this issue with vague promises and incomplete information. In 2018, after sustained international pressure, Turkmen authorities allowed unprecedented visits for relatives of over a dozen recently-convicted prisoners held *incommunicado* in the notorious Ovadan Depe prison.<sup>32</sup> Authorities also publicly committed to discussing a possible first visit by the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.<sup>33</sup> Turkmenistan nevertheless contended that because individuals considered “disappeared” had been sentenced by a court, their imprisonment could not be considered an “enforced disappearance.”<sup>34</sup> This claim is not supported by facts gathered by local human rights organizations. In 2018, the families of more than 100 persons received no official information about the fate or whereabouts of their loved ones following their deprivation of liberty at the time of arrest or trial.<sup>35</sup>

### **Recommended Questions to Turkmenistan**

1. *Please describe what steps have been taken to locate alleged victims of enforced disappearances, especially as relates to the detention of Mr. Allaberdyev and Ms. Ismatullaeva.*
2. *Please provide data on how many individuals during the Reporting Period have complained before domestic or international mechanisms of enforced disappearances; any domestic investigations undertaken into such complaints; and the results of such investigations.*

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<sup>28</sup> *Id.*

<sup>29</sup> *Gulgeldy Annaniyazov v. Turkmenistan*, UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (April 2, 2014), A/HRC/WGAD/2013/22, ¶¶ 7-11, available at <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/wgad/22-2013.html>.

<sup>30</sup> *International community should urgently intervene on behalf of Turkmen political prisoner Gulgeldy Annaniyazov*, Prove They Are Alive! (May 10, 2019), available at <https://provetheyarealive.org/international-community-should-urgently-intervene-annaniyazov/>.

<sup>31</sup> *Turkmenistan: Drop Charges, Free Wrongfully Imprisoned Lawyer*, Human Rights Watch (Oct. 22, 2020), available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/10/22/turkmenistan-drop-charges-free-wrongfully-imprisoned-lawyer>.

<sup>32</sup> *Some Inmates At Feared Turkmen Prison Allowed Visits From Relatives, Says Rights Group*, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (July 10, 2018), available at <https://www.rferl.org/a/turkmen-prison-inmates-visits-relatives-memorial-ovadan-depe/29354774.html>.

<sup>33</sup> *Turkmenistan: Events of 2020*, Human Rights Watch, available at <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/turkmenistan>.

<sup>34</sup> *Turkmenistan Should Immediately End Practice of Enforced Disappearances*, Human Rights Watch (Sept. 20, 2018), available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/09/20/turkmenistan-should-immediately-end-practice-enforced-disappearances>

<sup>35</sup> *Id.*

3. Please provide information on any guarantees included in the Tajik Constitution, Penal Code, and any other laws which protect an individual from enforced disappearance or incommunicado detention.
4. Describe what steps have been taken with respect to the recommendations set forth in paragraph 17 of the Concluding Observations.<sup>36</sup>

#### **E. Freedom of association and participation to participate in public affairs (Articles 22 and 25)**

Turkmenistan has repeatedly interfered with the peaceful political activism of Turkmen citizens living abroad. Targeted individuals—especially those studying at foreign universities—are subject to heavy surveillance.<sup>37</sup> For example, leaked documents have revealed that Turkmen officials compile lists of Turkmen students living abroad and recruit a small number of individuals to spy on their fellow international students.<sup>38</sup> The purported objective of this monitoring is to identify the students' extracurricular activities related to political or religious affiliations.<sup>39</sup>

Authorities targeted Omruzak Omarkuliev, a Turkmen student studying in Turkey who had founded a student organization for Turkmen students abroad. In February 2018, authorities lured him back to Turkmenistan under the guise of an invitation to participate in preparatory events for the then-upcoming elections.<sup>40</sup> Once in Turkmenistan, authorities disappeared Omarkuliev, seemingly to end his involvement in organizing students abroad.<sup>41</sup>

Authorities often subject the families of dissidents living abroad to intimidation and harassment.<sup>42</sup> For example, in spring 2021, Turkmen security officials repeatedly harassed family members of Rozybai Jumamuradov and Devlet Bayhan, independent Turkmen journalists based abroad.<sup>43</sup> Authorities reportedly summoned Jumamuradov's fourteen-year-old nephew to question him about contact with his uncle and ultimately threatened to jail him, jail his family, and murder Jumamuradov.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Turkmenistan adopted by the Committee at its 119<sup>th</sup> session (6-29 March 2017)*, *supra* note 7, ¶ 17.

<sup>37</sup> *World Report 2019: Turkmenistan*, Human Rights Watch, available at [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/world\\_report\\_download/hrw\\_world\\_report\\_2019.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/world_report_download/hrw_world_report_2019.pdf); see also *Freedom in the World 2021: Turkmenistan*, Freedom House, available at <https://freedomhouse.org/country/turkmenistan/freedom-world/2021>, D4.

<sup>38</sup> *How Turkmenistan Spies on Its Citizens at Home and Abroad*, Open Democracy (Aug. 16, 2018), available at <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/how-turkmenistan-spies-on-its-citizens/>.

<sup>39</sup> *Id.*

<sup>40</sup> *Petition to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention on behalf of Omruzak Omarkuliev*, Freedom Now and Hogan Lovells (May 29, 2020), pg. 4-6, available at <https://www.freedom-now.org/wp-content/uploads/Petition-to-the-UN-Working-Group-on-Arbitrary-Detention-5-29-20.pdf>.

<sup>41</sup> *Id.*, pgs. 6-7.

<sup>42</sup> *Freedom in the World 2021: Turkmenistan*, *supra* note 36, E2.

<sup>43</sup> *Turkmen Security Officials Threaten, Harass Families of Two Exiled Journalists*, Committee to Protect Journalists (May 26, 2021), available at <https://cpj.org/2021/05/turkmen-security-officials-threaten-harass-families-of-two-exiled-journalists/>.

<sup>44</sup> *Id.*

In October 2021, three activists, Akhmed Rakhmanov, Kamil Abulov, and Bayram Allaliyev, were detained in Istanbul, Turkey by immigration authorities. The three men were openly critical of Turkmen government policies, including violations of freedom of expression, denial of the COVID-19 virus within the country, and the refusal to renew passports. All three men were eventually released after several days in a deportation center.<sup>45</sup>

Human rights groups have reported on Turkmen authorities' efforts to recruit informants among the Turkmen diaspora in places such as Turkey.<sup>46</sup> Informants may have led to greater harassment of exiled dissidents. In July 2020, Turkish officials detained Dursoltan Taganova—an activist living in Istanbul, Turkey—during a protest in front of the Turkmen consulate.<sup>47</sup> Taganova was subjected to deportation proceedings on the grounds that her passport was due to expire.<sup>48</sup> Ultimately, authorities released Taganova and granted her a refugee visa for one year.<sup>49</sup> However, Turkmen authorities harassed Taganova's family in Turkmenistan and pressured them to publicly denounce her advocacy activities.<sup>50</sup> Taganova was again arrested in September 2021 and taken to a deportation center where she was released days later.<sup>51</sup>

These informants may also play an active role in disrupting peaceful protests abroad. For example, during a protest at the Turkmen embassy in Istanbul in August 2021, witnesses described government supporters beating protestors. During the same protest, government supporters forced Farhad Durdyev, a Turkmen blogger, into the embassy, where he was questioned for hours.<sup>52</sup>

In September 2021, Russian authorities detained Azat Isakov, a human rights activist living in Moscow. He was released two days later, however, he disappeared on October 20 and was reportedly held at the sixth branch of the Turkmenabat, Turkmenistan police station on October 22. Isakov routinely posted videos online criticizing the Turkmen government, including its handling of the hurricane that swept through the country in April 2020. His family in Turkmenistan had repeatedly received threats and were visited by government officials in July 2020 who sought Isakov's whereabouts in Russia.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *Turkey: Turkmen Activists Face Deportation*, Human Rights Watch (Oct. 27, 2021), available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/10/27/turkey-turkmen-activists-face-deportation>.

<sup>46</sup> *Turkmenistan: the state reinforces propaganda campaigns following rumours of the president's death*, International Partnership for Human Rights (Dec. 3, 2019), available at <https://www.iphronline.org/turkmenistan-the-state-reinforces-propaganda-campaigns.html>.

<sup>47</sup> *"Turkmenistan's Tiskhanouskaya": Activists Determined to Fight for Democratic Change, Says "We Are Not Afraid Anymore"*, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (Nov. 3, 2020), available at <https://www.rferl.org/a/turkmenistan-s-tsikhanouskaya-activist-determined-to-fight-for-democratic-change-says-we-are-not-afraid-anymore-/30927728.html>.

<sup>48</sup> *Turkey: Turkmen Activist Faces Deportation*, Human Rights Watch (Oct. 12, 2020), available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/10/12/turkey-turkmen-activist-faces-deportation>.

<sup>49</sup> *"Turkmenistan's Tiskhanouskaya": Activists Determined to Fight for Democratic Change, Says "We Are Not Afraid Anymore"*, *supra* note 46.

<sup>50</sup> *Id.*

<sup>51</sup> *Outspoken Critic Of Turkmen Government Released From Deportation Center In Istanbul*, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (Sep. 30, 2021), available at <https://www.rferl.org/a/turkmenistan-critic-released-turkey/31485540.html>.

<sup>52</sup> *Disrupted picket in Istanbul. New details*, Turkmenistan Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Aug. 2, 2021), available at <http://www.tmhelsinki.org/ru/modules/news/article.php?storyid=5371>.

<sup>53</sup> *Opposition Activist at Risk of Torture*, Amnesty International (Nov. 22, 2021), available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/EUR6150152021ENGLISH.pdf>.

### **Recommended Questions to Turkmenistan**

- 1. Please provide information on how many Turkmen citizens were extradited to Turkmenistan during the Reporting Period and the crimes with which such persons were charged.*
- 2. Please provide information on any reports of torture or ill-treatment against individuals arrested abroad and returned to Turkmenistan; any investigations undertaken into such complaints; and the results of such investigations.*
- 3. Please provide information on any reports of extraterritorial harassment by members of Turkmenistan's police or security services; any investigations undertaken into such complaints; and the results of such investigations.*