



Prove They Are Alive Campaign
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Mr. Amandurdy Arabov
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CC: H.E. Minister of Foreign Affairs Rashid Meredov
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan
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Ashgabat, Turkmenistan
Email: info@mfa.gov.tm

January 7, 2015

Dear Mr. Arabov:

We, members of the international campaign "Prove They Are Alive!," are aware of the work of the Turkmen National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights under the President of Turkmenistan and its work in promoting democracy and human rights in the country. We would like to to strengthen international cooperation with your Institute in the spheres of democracy and human rights. We hope the Institute will collaborate with us on the issue of enforced disappearances in Turkmenistan. The role of the Institute can be decisive in the fight against enforced disappearances in the country.

The "Prove They Are Alive!" campaign was launched in 2013 by a coalition of international organizations with the goal of obtaining and documenting information about the fates of individuals who have disappeared in Turkmen prisons. Most of the disappearances occurred in the early 2000s; relatives, the public and international organizations have received no news about these individuals for over a decade. We appeal to you, as the Head of the Turkmen National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, to shed light upon this issue.

Recently, our campaign documented 66 cases of enforced disappearances in the country, published in our new report, *Prove They Are Alive!: The Disappeared in Turkmenistan*.¹ Our other recent report, *Ovadan Depe: Medieval Torture in Modern Turkmenistan*,² documents first-hand accounts of widespread torture political prisoners have endured in the Ovadan Depe prison. Both reports are attached for your information.

These reports expose widespread violations of Turkmenistan's obligations under domestic and international law that ban enforced disappearances. Analysis of violations of the law can be found on page 53 of the *Prove They Are Alive!: The Disappeared in Turkmenistan* report (page 49 of the Russian translation), and page 18 of the *Ovadan Depe: Medieval Torture in Modern Turkmenistan* report (page 14 of the Russian translation). We hope these publications will be useful in your work in advancing and promoting human rights and the rule of law in Turkmenistan.

We also urge the Institute to investigate these cases of enforced disappearances and associated violations of national and international law and to disclose current information on the fate, health and whereabouts of the 66 disappeared individuals.

The role of the Turkmen National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights is of utmost importance in combatting enforced disappearances in the country thanks to the work it does to monitor the implementation of national legislation and international engagement on civil and political rights. Revealing the fate and whereabouts of the disappeared could be an important milestone on the path to strengthening the rule of law and justice in Turkmenistan, as well as a humane step, which corresponds to Turkmenistan's international obligations in the field of human rights. In order to fully enter the community of civilized nations, Turkmenistan should turn the page, making unjust sentencing and the imprisonment of people without contact with their relatives and the outside world a thing of the past.

We look forward to your response and attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Kate Watters, Crude Accountability, USA

Rachel Denber, Human Rights Watch, USA

Bjorn Engesland, Norwegian Helsinki Commission, Norway

Vitaliy Ponomarev, Human Rights Center 'Memorial', Russia

Yuri Dzhibladze, Centre for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights, Russia

Olga Zakharova, Freedom Files, Russia

¹ In English: <http://provetheyarealive.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/FINAL-Disappeared-Report-September-2014-Compressed.pdf>

In Russian: http://provetheyarealive.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/FINAL-Disappeared-Report_RUS.pdf

² In English: <http://provetheyarealive.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/FInal-O-D-Report-September-2014-compressed.pdf>

In Russian: <http://provetheyarealive.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Ovadan-Depe-report-RUS.pdf>