



Contact Information:

Vitaly Ponamarev TEL: +7-910-424-5806 (Russian)

Kate Watters TEL: +1-571-332-5895 (English, Russian)

Geldy Kyarizov and Family Threatened by Unidentified Turkmen

October 5, 2015, Alexandria, VA, USA, and Moscow, Russia

On October 3, 2015, well-known Turkmen horse breeder Geldy Kyarizov and his family were threatened by an unknown man speaking to them in the Turkmen language while riding the escalator in a Moscow, Russia, metro station.

The family was exiting the Tsarytsino metro station during the day when unknown men passed by the Kyarizov family on the escalator. One of them stopped close to Geldy Kyarizov and said in Turkmen, “You are an ungrateful swine. They told you to stay quiet. Why did your wife have to open her mouth in Warsaw?” He then elbowed Kyarizov in the stomach, ran up the escalator and disappeared into the crowd.

Kyarizov noticed he was being followed for several days prior to this incident. According to Kyarizov and his family, unknown individuals continued shadowing them openly the day after the violent incident.

“I have never been involved in politics and I have no political ambitions,” said Geldy Kyarizov. “I just want to live peacefully with my family and have the opportunity to pursue my life’s work—the revival of the Akhal-Teke horse.”

Geldy Kyarizov and his family recently left Turkmenistan after spending over ten years on the travel ban list. Kyarizov is Turkmenistan’s preeminent expert on and breeder of the Akhal-Teke horse. He saved the horse from extinction in the 1980s and bred it throughout the 1990s until 2002, when he was unjustly arrested and imprisoned on trumped-up charges by then-President Saparmurat Niyazov. Niyazov was envious of Kyarizov’s fame and claimed only President could possess “exceptional knowledge” of the Akhal-Teke horse. Kyarizov served almost six years behind bars and lost over 40 kilos in the infamous, secret Ovadan Depe prison, where political prisoners are held and subjected to torture. Kyarizov’s expertise regarding the Akhal-Teke put him at odds with the current regime as well, since the horse is considered the sacred symbol of the Turkmen nation, and only the nation’s leader, according to the official line, can hold “exceptional knowledge” of the Akhal-Teke horse.

On September 22, 2015, Kyarizov's wife, Yulia Serebryannik, spoke at a briefing organized by the Prove They Are Alive! campaign at the annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in Warsaw, Poland. Yulia spoke about Turkmenistan's practice of travel bans and "blacklisting" people by forbidding them from traveling outside of the country, describing her family's ordeal as an example of this unlawful practice.

"There is little doubt that this incident was inspired by Turkmenistan's secret police. This is the first known case of politically motivated violence against a Turkmen emigrant in Moscow in the past ten years," said Vitaly Ponamarev, of the Moscow-based Human Rights Center Memorial. "The last such incident was in 2003, when Turkmenistan's secret police carried out the instructions of then President Niyazov to neutralize the Turkmen opposition. It is not clear at what level these latest actions were authorized."

The Prove They Are Alive! campaign considers the attack against Geldy Kyarizov and his family to be a striking case of reprisal for attending an international conference and interacting with OSCE representatives and diplomats of the OSCE participating states. The campaign calls upon the OSCE political bodies and participating states to send a strong and clear message to the Turkmen government condemning the threats that followed Serebryannik's remarks at the HDIM. The campaign also demands that the government of Turkmenistan stop its campaign of psychological and physical terror against the Kyarizov family.