



International community should urgently intervene on behalf of Turkmen political prisoner Gulgeldy Annaniyazov

Statement by the Prove They Are Alive! Campaign

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The international Prove They are Alive! Campaign has received information from Turkmenistan confirming that Turkmen authorities have added five years to the sentence against prominent Turkmen dissident Gulgeldy Annaniyazov, who was sentenced to 11 years in prison in 2008. The new sentence was imposed shortly before the end of his prior prison term. Annaniyazov is currently serving the new sentence in a settlement colony. Under his new sentence, the details of which remain unknown, he was transferred to the town of Karabogaz (formerly Bekdash) on the Caspian coast in the first half of March 2019. In March, Annaniyazov's family, who had not seen him since his arrest in 2008, were allowed for the first time to visit him in his new place of detention and bring him clothes and a food parcel. Over the past two months, they were also able to talk to him on the phone.

Human rights organizations have featured Annaniyazov since 1995, when he was arrested and sentenced to 15 years in prison for organizing a nonviolent anti-government demonstration in Ashgabat. In 1999, the dissident was released as part of an amnesty, and granted asylum in Norway in 2002. In June 2008, he was arrested at his parents' home near Ashgabat, and on 7 October 2008, he was charged with illegal border crossing and convicted by the Supreme Court of Turkmenistan.

After that, Annaniyazov's fate remained unknown for a long time, as he was held incommunicado. In 2009, he was able to smuggle out a written note stating that he was in the notorious Ovadan Depe prison, but this information was not officially confirmed.

In 2013, The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found Annaniyazov's imprisonment to constitute a violation of international law and called for his release. In response to requests for information about Annaniyazov made in 2015-2017 by the UN Human Rights Committee, the UN Committee against Torture and the UN Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances, and in the framework of the OSCE, the government of Turkmenistan provided incomplete or inaccurate information. Since 2014, Annaniyazov's name has been on the Prove They Are Alive! campaign's list of the disappeared.

Since 2015, Turkmenistan's authorities repeatedly stated that Annaniyazov had been transferred to the prison colony in Tedjen, where his relatives could visit him. However, until March 2019, no family visits or other communication with Annaniyazov had been provided.

According to the Prove They Are Alive! campaign, the extension of Annaniyazov's sentence is part of a broader pattern affecting political prisoners in Turkmenistan.

At the same time, in response to international criticism triggered by the problem of enforced disappearances, the Turkmen authorities allowed Annaniyazov to have visits and phone calls from his family and even indicated the possibility of early release. The Turkmen authorities' further steps are likely to be influenced primarily by foreign policy factors.

The Prove They Are Alive! campaign urges the Turkmen authorities to repeal the unlawful sentence against Annaniyazov, to release him immediately and ensure that he can travel back to Norway and reunite with his family.

The governments of countries which engage in a dialogue with Turkmenistan, as well as the OSCE and UN bodies and institutions and other intergovernmental organizations should demand Gulgeldy Annaniyazov's immediate release.

The international human rights Prove They Are Alive! campaign has been working since 2013 to protect the rights of people held incommunicado in Turkmen prisons and to halt the practice of enforced disappearances in Turkmenistan. The campaign acts with the support of the international Civic Solidarity Platform and actively interacts with a broad range of human rights defenders, experts, and intergovernmental organizations, including the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the European Union. For more information, please see the campaign's website <http://provetheyarealive.org>.