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THE EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF
JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM SUBCOMMITTEE

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES IN TURKMENISTAN

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Statement for the OSCE
Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting
1-2 April 2019, Vienna

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THE EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF
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Bahram Hemdemov Released

On February 13, 2019, Bahram Hemdemov, 55 years old, was released from prison in Turkmenistan after serving a four-year sentence in Seydi prison (LB-E/12). He is now reunited with his wife, Gulzira, and their four children. Mr. Hemdemov was arrested on March 14, 2015, simply for holding a peaceful religious meeting at his home in a suburb of Turkmenabad and was convicted by the Lebap Regional Court on May 19, 2015.

The Turkmenistan government granted amnesty to prisoners three times a year on average during Mr. Hemdemov's imprisonment but overlooked him each time—even though convicted murderers were among those freed. On August 15, 2016, Mr. Hemdemov filed a complaint with the UN Human Rights Committee (CCPR), which is still pending consideration.

Eleven of Jehovah's Witnesses remain in prison in Turkmenistan for refusal to perform military service despite ten CCPR decisions issued against the government for persecuting and imprisoning young Witnesses who are conscientious objectors.