



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Detention of Former Minister of Culture in Turkmenistan

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 30, 2013

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States is deeply concerned by the incommunicado detention of Turkmenistan's former Minister of Culture Geldimurat Nurmammedov. Turkmen authorities detained Mr. Nurmammedov on October 4, 2012, while he was working to register an initiative group that would nominate candidates for the December 2013 parliamentary elections. He had reportedly been under surveillance for several months after speaking critically of the ruling Democratic Party during an interview with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) prior to Turkmenistan's 2012 presidential election. After Nurmammedov's arrest, police reportedly pressured two of his brothers to sign a statement claiming he was addicted to drugs. Authorities transferred Nurmammedov to a "treatment and work" center for drug addicts in the city of Tejen, 125 miles east of Ashgabat following a closed "trial" in the Kopet Dag district of Ashgabat on October 6, 2012.

The Government of Turkmenistan has not provided the Nurmammedov family information about the charges against him, nor have they granted the family access to him. Recognizing the Government of Turkmenistan's stated commitment to abide by international human rights standards, including OSCE commitments to a fair trial and that all individuals in detention or incarceration be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of each human being, the United States calls upon Turkmenistan to release Mr. Nurmammedov from custody immediately.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.