



DEN NORSKE HELSINGFORSKOMITE
NORWEGIAN HELSINKI COMMITTEE

OSCE HDIM

Freedom of Movement, Tuesday 29 September 2009, Lene Wetteland

Mr Moderator, Ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen

7 October next week marks the sad anniversary of the sentencing of the Turkmen dissident Gulgeldy Annaniyazov in a closed trial. It is not known what provision he was sentenced under. His family had no information of his whereabouts from the day he was arrested on 24 June 2008, until they received a short note from him in April this year. It is now likely that Annaniyazov has been moved to the prison Garbaty outside Ashgabat, a prison nicknamed "Bent back" because the cells are no more than 1.40 cm under the ceiling.

Annaniyazov was granted asylum in Norway in 2002. However, hoping to contribute to democratic developments in Turkmenistan, he returned to his home country during the Spring of 2008. Immediately after his arrival, he was arrested in the house of his parents on 24 June. He was then kept in incommunicado detention until he was sentenced to 11 years imprisonment in a closed trial on 7 October. Though it is not been clear what he was sentenced for, it is believed that he was arrested and sentenced for illegal entry to Turkmenistan. However, it is also likely that other charges were raised against him. The conduction of a closed trial where the proceedings, charges, independence of the judge, or the equality of arms remain undisclosed to family members or observers is in strict violation of the right to a fair trial. **The Norwegian Helsinki Committee encourages the Turkmen government to take the opportunity of the ongoing OSCE workshops for effective reform of the legislative process to ensure the right to a fair trial.**

Even though Annaniyazov enjoys political asylum in Norway, he is still a citizen of Turkmenistan. Crossing the border to one's own home country should not qualify for an 11 year imprisonment sentence. Several attempts by the Norwegian Helsinki Committee and Norwegian government to influence Turkmen authorities to release Annaniyazov, including by appeals through the OSCE centre in Ashgabat, have not given the desired result. **The Norwegian Helsinki Committee urges the Turkmen authorities to release Gulgeldy Annaniyazov and let him travel back to Norway.**