

Dear Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellencies, dear colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Our statement today concerns violations of the rights of movement and association in Turkmenistan.

First, allow me to say few words about Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty:

The mission of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty is to promote democratic values and institutions by disseminating factual information and ideas. RFE/RL operates one of the most comprehensive news operations in South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, the Russian Federation, the South Caucasus, Central Asia, Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan. We rely on 22 bureaus throughout Europe and the CIS and over 1,100 freelancers report daily local news and current affairs.

RFE/RL broadcasts six hours daily in the Turkmen language to Turkmenistan. The Turkmen authorities do not allow us to register a bureau in Ashgabat and refuse proper accreditation to our local correspondents.

RFE/RL would like to bring to your attention the following violations of freedom of movement on the part of the Turkmen authorities:

1. Three local correspondents of RFE/RL's Turkmen Service are not allowed to move freely inside Turkmenistan. The Turkmen authorities confiscated their passports and all other forms of identification. Passport control is required at checkpoint within the country. Therefore, none of them can currently leave their city;
2. The telephone lines of some correspondents have been cut off for the past few months, and we are unable to reach many of them. They are isolated;
3. Most RFE/RL correspondents are under constant surveillance on the part of the Turkmen secret services. Recently, one of our correspondents was interrogated by officers from the Ministry of National Security. The reason for this –officers told him- was his friendly relationship with Rakhim Esenov, who left Turkmenistan to receive an award for his journalistic work;
4. Rakhim Esenov has also been a regular correspondent for RFE/RL. When he was offered the Pen-Barbara Goldsmith "Freedom to Write" Award, he had extreme difficulties in receiving permission to travel abroad to participate in the award ceremony in New York. He finally got authorization to travel, but authorities are now pressuring his family and friends to be certain that he returns to Turkmenistan;
5. After the death in custody of RFE/RL's correspondent Ogulsapar Muradova, her children have experienced harassment by the Turkmen authorities. First, they were pressured by Turkmen officers to not gather at their mother's funerals. They too had

their telephone lines cut off. Officials have interrogated all of those who came to Muradova's funerals. They are now scared to meet and are continually harassed.

In addition to putting civil liberties at risk, and threatening the Turkmen population, such violations considerably limit RFE/RL's ability to work in the country and to carry out our mission of promoting democratic values and institutions.

Again, RFE/RL is concerned about the lack of freedom of movement inside Turkmenistan. Internal exile is a reality in this country. We are also concerned about the fate of Muradova's family and fear that her children might be sent to internal exile. We feel that they have been punished for their mother's human rights activities and work with RFE/RL.

Mr. Chairman, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty is hereby asking the OSCE to raise the awareness of the international community of restrictions of freedom of movement in Turkmenistan.