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09 July 2010

To

Minister Rashid Meredov
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Prospect Makhtumkuli, 83
744000, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan
Fax: +993-12-35-42-41

Dear Minister Meredov:

I write as the Secretary General of CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, an international alliance of civil society with members and partners in over a hundred countries. I write to you in solidarity with the civil society in Turkmenistan.

CIVICUS is particularly concerned about the situation of Mr. and Mrs. Matiev, who have been denied exit from Turkmenistan to seek medical treatment in the Netherlands. Elena and Annamamedov, both journalists, were previously working for the newspaper "Neutral Turkmenistan." Mr. Matiev is scheduled for medical treatment unavailable in Turkmenistan for an eye condition on the 12th of July in Amsterdam, and failure to undergo treatment may result in loss of vision. Both journalists have been dismissed in the past from their positions as correspondents for Turkmen state newspaper "Neutral Turkmenistan" after business trips to Western Europe, and local sources indicate that the couple has been under surveillance for many years.

On June 27th, Elena and Annamamedov Myatiev were taken off the flight from Ashgabat to Istanbul for unexplained reasons, despite having Schengen visas. According to local sources, airport officials searched the contents of Mrs. Myatiev's computer for sensitive information. While nothing of this nature was found, they were not released from the country, citing an order by the Ministry of the Interior.

Following their return home, the journalists immediately wrote letters to the President, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of National Security, and the State Migration Service. They have not yet received any replies.

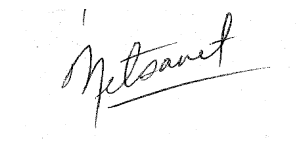
CIVICUS is concerned that this barrier to leave the country may be associated with the journalists' previous work and call upon the Government of Turkmenistan to ensure the protection of freedom of movement and expression, and grant Mr. and Mrs. Matiev immediate access to medical treatment in the Netherlands. Turkmenistan is party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which guarantees freedom of movement and individual's rights to "leave any country, including his own".

Minister Meredov, the case of Elena and Annamamedov Myatiev not only concerns their fundamental rights to freedom of movement and expression, also their right to

health, enshrined in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In this regard, CIVICUS hopes that the Government of Turkmenistan will grant its citizens access to urgent medical treatment abroad, which cannot be obtained inside the country.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should your office have any questions or concerns for clarification.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Netsanet", written over a light blue rectangular background.

Netsanet Belay
Director, Policy and Research
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