



September 21, 2015

Ambassador Allan Mustard  
Embassy of the United States in Ashgabat  
9 1984 Street (formerly Pushkin Street)  
Ashgabat 744000  
Turkmenistan

Dear Ambassador Mustard:

We are writing to express our concern about the arrest and treatment of Saparmamed Nepeskuliev by the government of Turkmenistan, and to ask the U.S. government to call for his release.

The Turkmen government has held Mr. Nepeskuliev incommunicado for two months. After arresting Mr. Nepeskuliev on July 7, the police of Balkanabad did not respond to repeated inquiries from his family. Three weeks later, the family tracked him down at a prison near Turkmenbashi. As of September 4, Mr. Nepeskuliev's mother was informed that her son was sentenced to three years in prison, but officials have not confirmed the sentence.

Mr. Nepeskuliev is a freelance correspondent, reporting for Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) and for Alternative Turkmenistan News (ATN). Under a pseudonym, he has covered state-orchestrated forced labor in the cotton sector, water shortages, inadequate access to health care, and the luxury homes of officials.

The Turkmen government's arrest and treatment of Mr. Nepeskuliev fits a pattern of other cases in which the government has silenced civil society by arrest, denial of due process, and imprisonment on trumped up charges. Amnesty International, the Committee to Protect Journalists, Human Rights Watch, Norwegian Helsinki Committee, and the OSCE have all publicly called for Mr. Nepeskuliev's release.

We ask you to promptly urge the Turkmen government to release Saparmamed Nepeskuliev immediately and unconditionally, and to permit journalists and activists to report without fear of reprisals. We appreciate your attention to this matter and would be happy to discuss it with you further.

Sincerely,  
The Cotton Campaign

Advocates for Public Interest Law



AFL-CIO



Alternative Turkmenistan News



Bennett Freeman, former U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor

Child Labor Coalition



Daughters of Charity, Province of St. Louise



Human Rights Watch



International Labor Rights Forum



Mercy Health



Mercy Investment Services



National Consumers League



Portfolio Advisory Board, Adrian Dominican Sisters



Responsible Sourcing Network



St. Joseph Health



Solidarity Center



Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania



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