

URGENT ACTION

OPPOSITION ACTIVIST AT RISK OF TORTURE

Azat Isakov, a Turkmen activist with the opposition movement *Turkmenia, Unite!* went missing in Russia on October 20, 2021, and reportedly reappeared later in Turkmenistan. According to a statement by *Turkmenia, Unite!* he is held incommunicado in the Ministry of National Security department in Turkmenabat, in north-east Turkmenistan. His fate and whereabouts must be officially confirmed. **Azat Isakov is at imminent risk of torture and other ill-treatment, he must be released immediately.**

TAKE ACTION:

1. Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
2. [Click here](#) to let us know the actions you took on **Urgent Action 163.21**. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

Presidents of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov

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Dear President,

I am writing to you to express my deep concern over the safety of opposition activist **Azat Isakov** whose whereabouts are unknown since he went missing from Nikonovo, a village in Moscow region in Russia, on October 20, 2021. He is believed to be held by the Ministry of National Security of Turkmenistan.

Azat Isakov, a Turkmen labour migrant living in Russia, has been a vocal critic of the Turkmenistan government since 2019 and joined the opposition movements Turkmenia, Unite! On October 20, 2021, Isakov sent a message to a trusted contact explaining that he feared Russian policemen were about to arrest him. Since then all messages have stopped.

On November 9, 2021, a member of Turkmenia, Unite! received a formal response to their inquiry from the Russian Ministry of Interior indicating that Azat Isakov left the country on October 22, 2021. Azat Isakov could not have left the country through his own means because he did not possess the necessary travel documents.

Since 2020 Azat Isakov and his family members living in Turkmenistan have reported receiving constant threats from officers of the Ministry of National Security of Turkmenistan, including threats of abduction and rape of family members.

I respectfully urge you to do everything in your power to:

- Ensure the urgent disclosure of information on the fate and whereabouts of Azat Isakov;
- If he is in the custody of Turkmenistani law enforcement, ensure that he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment and that he has access to his family and any medical care he might require;
- Moreover, unless there is sufficient credible evidence to charge him with an internationally recognized criminal offence, ensure that Azat Isakov is released immediately.

Sincerely,

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Turkmenia, Unite! movement is an opposition group that actively criticizes the Turkmenistan government through social media. They post videos on their Facebook and YouTube pages where they highlight social problems within the country and call on the president Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov to respond to people's needs. *Turkmenia, Unite!* became very vocal after the events in 2020: mass poisoning of Turkmenistani labour migrants in Turkey in March, and hurricane that brought havoc in the Lebat region in April.

Azat Isakov's parents, wife and children live in Turkmenistan. Since Azat Isakov's online activism they have reported threats from the Ministry of National Security. On July 24, 2020, Ministry officials seized their phones to investigate Isakov's whereabouts in Russia. Two days later one of the pro-government YouTube channels declared that they knew Azat Isakov's Russian address. Soon afterwards Azat Isakov started to receive threats and demands to return to Turkmenistan. Isakov was afraid of persecution and after his documents were stolen he refused to go to the Russian migration services to renew his working status. On September 15, 2021, Russian police apprehended Isakov but released him after 2 days in custody. On October 20, 2021, Azat Isakov disappeared and was reported back in Turkmenistan on October 22, 2021.

Activists from *Turkmenia, Unite!* posted a statement on their YouTube channel where they claim Isakov is being held incommunicado in the 6th branch of the Police Department in Turkmenabat notorious for prosecuting opposition figures and journalist, and using torture practises.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Turkmen, Russian, English.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: January 17, 2022

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Azat Isakov (he/him)