



## **Another Victim of Enforced Disappearance in Turkmenistan: Akmurad Redjepov Dies in Custody**

### **The Prove They Are Alive! Campaign's Statement on Akmurad Redjepov's Death in Prison**

25 August 2017

The former Head of the Security Service of the President of Turkmenistan, Akmurad Redjepov, died in prison on August 10, 2017, after 10 years of having been held in custody without any contact with the outside world, including his family, lawyers, or international human rights representatives. His body was released to relatives on the same day, according to [Human Rights Center "Memorial"](#). The official version named thrombosis as the cause of death.

A former KGB officer, Akmurad Redjepov served in the rank of general as the Head of the Security Service of the President of Turkmenistan from 1992 until his dismissal on May 15, 2007. He was arrested just a few days later. On July 27, 2007, he was sentenced to 17 years of imprisonment for alleged corruption, tax evasion, and other crimes. Experts believe that Redjepov was removed because he was one of the most influential figures in the "inner circle" of the first Turkmen president, Saparmurat Niyazov and was therefore perceived as a threat by the new president Gurbanguly Berdymuhamedov. It is widely known that Redjepov played a key role Berdymuhamedov's ascent to power after Niyazov's sudden death in December 2006.

[The news about Akmurad Redjepov's death](#) came seven months after it became known that another victim of enforced disappearances in Turkmenistan, [Tirkish Tyrmyev, died in custody](#) in January 2017. Altogether, at least five people from the "Prove They Are Alive!" list of the disappeared died in prison between December 2015 and August 2017, according to media reports and information from relatives. The fate of the other disappeared people in Turkmenistan's prisons remains unknown.

Enforced disappearance of people sentenced to long prison terms is the most acute human rights problem in Turkmenistan. Reports by the “Prove They Are Alive!” campaign include [88 documented cases](#) of people kept in full isolation, some of them for as long as 15 years, with several dozen more people likely in the same situation. Most people on the campaign’s list are former government officials who were arbitrarily perceived as a threat due to their opinions, influence, or visibility, and have been subjected to this cruel and illegal punishment.

In September 2015, the Turkmen authorities stopped short of publicly acknowledging enforced disappearances in their country by acknowledging, for the first time, the existence of a problem concerning “people sentenced to long prison terms” in their statement at the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw. At the following HDIM in September 2016, the Turkmen representative claimed that the authorities had released some of the people from the “Prove They Are Alive!” list and had informed international organisations about a few others. However, this information has not been made public and cannot be verified by independent observers such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, which has no access to the prisons.

The “Prove They Are Alive!” campaign stresses that providing information to international organisations behind the doors no solution to the problem of enforced disappearances. The solution is to ensure prisoners’ regular access to their families, lawyers, and international monitors, and to provide them with the opportunity to communicate with the outside world. Therefore, we demand that Turkmenistan provides proof of the statement made at the HDIM by allowing full and regular access to all prisoners by their families, lawyers, and representatives of appropriate independent bodies, including the International Committee of the Red Cross and relevant United Nations and OSCE experts, in line with international standards and Turkmen criminal justice legislation.

We are confident that the death of Akmurad Redjepov as well as the recent deaths of other influential government officials who had been subjected to enforced disappearances in secret prisons, represent a consistent unwritten policy of the Turkmenistan authorities aimed at eradicating imprisoned former key political figures of the Turkmen state. This tragic list of recent deaths includes former Deputy Prime Minister Yolly Gurbanmuradov (December 2015) and former head of the Border Service General Tirkish Tyrmyev (January 2017).

We reiterate that the deaths of victims of enforced disappearances in Turkmen prisons are a challenge to the international community. The authorities of Turkmenistan continue to defiantly ignore international obligations of the country within the frameworks of the UN and the OSCE and simulate an ineffective “dialogue” with international institutions on human rights issues.

We are sure that only public and principled statements by the leaders of democratic countries and international organizations and linking economic cooperation with real human rights progress in Turkmenistan will stop this orgy of death. We call on the leaders of democratic countries and international organizations to respond in a serious way to the deteriorating human rights situation in Turkmenistan. The international community must take urgent steps with regard to prisoners who have been kept in isolation for many years in Turkmenistan's prisons. Otherwise, all of them can expect a tragic fate.

*The international human rights campaign "Prove They Are Alive!" has been working since 2013 to protect the rights of detainees serving long-term sentences in Turkmen prisons who, since their sentences have been held incommunicado, and to halt the practice of enforced disappearances in Turkmenistan's prisons. The campaign acts with the support of the international Civic Solidarity Platform and actively interacts with a broad range of human rights defenders, experts, and inter-governmental organisations, including the United Nations, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the European Union.*

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For information on the Prove They Are Alive! campaign, please visit the website: <http://provetheyarealive.org/>.

For the current list of cases of enforced disappearance in the prisons of Turkmenistan, visit: <https://provetheyarealive.org/the-disappeared/>

For the current "Prove They Are Alive!" report, visit: [http://provetheyarealive.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/2FINAL-Disappeared-Report\\_September-2016.pdf](http://provetheyarealive.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/2FINAL-Disappeared-Report_September-2016.pdf)