



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1181
Vienna, 12 April 2018**

**EU statement on Enforced Disappearances in
Turkmenistan**

The European Union is concerned about reports that two further victims of enforced disappearances have died in prison in Turkmenistan. Mr. Begmurad Otuzov, former Head of the Investigative Department of the National Security Committee of Turkmenistan, reportedly died in prison in early February 2018 after more than 15 years in full isolation in Ovdan Depe prison, during which period he had no contact with the outside world. Mr. Allamurat Allakuliev, former Head of the Fourth Department of the National Security Committee of Turkmenistan, reportedly died after sixteen years in BLK/4, a special colony for former law enforcement officials in Balkan Velayat.

These cases are regrettably only two grave examples of a broader pattern of continued human rights violations in Turkmenistan, which include arbitrary detention, lack of fair trials, enforced disappearances as well as torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The Prove They Are Alive! Campaign has currently documented more than one hundred cases of people kept in full isolation in Turkmenistan's prisons. Mr. Allakuliev's death marks at least the 11th death in custody over the past three years. The fate of many other disappeared people in Turkmenistan's prisons remains unknown.

The EU reiterates its strong call on Turkmenistan to immediately and effectively acknowledge this problem, take action on the outstanding cases and to eradicate the problem of enforced disappearances. We also call on Turkmenistan to respond to the recommendations made previously in the UN Human Rights Council, in the UN Committee Against Torture and in the OSCE Permanent Council, in relation to human rights concerns as well as the recommendations made in the Moscow

Mechanism report by OSCE rapporteur Dr. Emmanuel Decaux, which was published 15 years ago.

The EU reaffirms its strong commitment to the prevention of enforced disappearances, which constitutes a serious violation of human rights, inter alia, the right to not be subjected to torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Our international and OSCE commitments are clear: any forms of torture and ill-treatment are unequivocally prohibited, under all circumstances and without exemptions.

The EU has repeatedly urged all participating States, including Turkmenistan, to consider ratifying the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, and to take practical steps to combat enforced disappearances. This includes effectively investigating allegations of enforced disappearances, bringing perpetrators to justice and providing proper redress to the victims and their families.

In this context, we take note of the recent announcements made by President Berdimuhamedov before the Parliament to strengthen the implementation of the rule of law in Turkmenistan. Especially, we appreciate plans to improve the criminal law and penitentiary system as well as strengthening judicial independence. We also welcome plans to improve the situation of civil society organizations and democratic exchange.

The European Union stands ready to continue dialogue with Turkmenistan, including on human rights issues and the enforced disappearances. We are also looking forward to a continuation of the visits by diplomatic missions and representations of multilateral organizations to prisons in Turkmenistan in the near future.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country ICELAND, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.