Announcement

Amnesty International and International PEN report that writer Rakhim Esenov (78 years) was conditionally released on 9 March 2004. Two others were still detained in connection with Esenov’s historical novel, The Crowned Wanderer, set during the period of the Mogul Empire (1526-1803 CE) (see NCH #34). We hope that you can send the recommended urgent appeals immediately. Please remember to write in your professional capacity.

RAPID ACTION NETWORK

17 March 2004—Update to RAN 06/04

TURKMENISTAN: Writer Rakhim Esenov freed yet and journalist Ashirkuli Bariyev still detained.

Below is the text of an Amnesty International Urgent Action informing of the release of writer Rakhim Esenov, and the continued detention of two others arrested at the same time. PEN Centres are asked to send appeals following the guidance given by Amnesty International. The PEN headquarters will continue to monitor the case and provide updates.

Amnesty International Urgent Action 90/04 (2 March 2004)—Further information

Rakhim Esenov was released on 9 March, on condition that he does not leave the country. He had been detained by offices of the Ministry for National Security (MNB) in the capital, Ashgabat, at the end of February, and charged on 2 March with “inciting social, national and religious hatred” in connection with his novel Ventsenosny Skitalets (The Crowned Wanderer).

His son-in-law Igor Karielov is believed to be still in detention, although his precise whereabouts remain unknown. He was reportedly accused of conspiring with Rakhim Esenov in the “smuggling” of 800 copies of the novel into Turkmenistan.
Rakhim Esenov’s close friend [journalist] Ashirkuli Bayriyev is held in the MNB’s investigation-isolation prison, thought it is still not known why he was arrested. Shortly after his arrest, his son, an English-language teacher, and his wife, a journalist, were both fired from their jobs.

Rakhim Esenov recently told the Memorial Human Rights Centre in Moscow that he denies all charges made against him and pointed out that he had paid customs duties before bringing his book into Turkmenistan.

Rakhim Esenov is reported to have said that he was treated well while he was held in the MNB’s investigation-isolation prison, and that he was allowed to receive daily messages from home. The day after is release, his passport, which had been illegally confiscated by MNB officers, was returned to him.

The international community had intervened on Rakhim Esenov’s behalf, and he cites action taken by the US Embassy and the OSCE as having played a decisive role in his release. The Russian Embassy also expressed its concern over the arrest of Rakhim Esenov, a Russian citizen.

Rakhim Esenov said: “I don’t know what will be come of this case, but I am tired of being afraid. My son-in-law Igor Kaprielov is still in prison.”

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

Please send appeals as quickly as possible, in English, Russian, Turkmen or your own language:

welcoming the release of Rakhim Esenov, although remaining concerned about the continuing restrictions on his travel;

pointing out that Ashirkuli Bayriyev and Igor Kaprielov are still detained and urging that:

(a) they are not subjected to any form of violence and are treated humanely while detained;
(b) details be provided on Igor Kaprielov’s whereabouts;
(c) information on the reasons for the two men’s continuing detention be made clear.

**APPEALS TO:**
President Saparmurad Niyazov  
744000 g. Ashgabat  
Apaptre Prezidenta  
Prezidetu Turkmenistana NIYAZOVU S. A  
Turkmenistan  
Fax: +993 12 35 51 12

Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Rashit Meredov  
744000 g. Ashgabat  
pr. Magtymguly 83  
Ministerstvo inostrannykh del Turkmenistana  
Ministru MEREDOVU R  
Turkmenistan  
Fax: +993 12 35 42 41  
Email: mfatm@online.tm

For further information please contact Sara Whyatt at the Writers in Prison Committee of International PEN, 9/10 Charterhouse Buildings, London EC1M 7AT, United Kingdom. Tel: +44 (0) 207 253 3226; Fax: +44 (0) 207 253 5711; email: <swhyatt@wipcpen.org>.