



IPHR
International
Partnership
for Human Rights

To:

Minister of Foreign Affairs Rashid Meredov
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Re: Cooperation with UN Special Procedures

Dear Foreign Minister Meredov,

We are writing to you on behalf of Turkmen Initiative for Human Rights (TIHR) and International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR) with respect to your government's cooperation with the special procedures of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

As you know, the UN special procedures play a key role in assessing the human rights situation in individual countries and providing expert advice to governments on how to address human rights issues. In its National Human Rights Action Plan for 2016-2020, Turkmenistan committed itself to permitting and facilitating visits by UN special procedures (point 6 of part II of section II and point 9 of part III of section

II of the plan). According to the Action Plan, the timeframe for the realisation of these tasks was 2016-2018. However, no visits by special procedures took place in these years nor during the remainder of the duration of the action plan.

We are aware that a National Human Rights Action Plan for 2021-2025 has been elaborated in follow-up to the previous Action Plan; however, as the new Action Plan has not yet been made public, we do not know what commitments it sets out with respect to visits by UN special procedures.

We welcome that Turkmenistan, in accordance with the recommendations it received during the third and previous cycles of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), issued a standing invitation to all UN special procedures in May 2018, thereby announcing that it will always accept requests to visit from all thematic special procedures. However, while this was an important step, it is also crucial that Turkmenistan cooperates constructively with any special procedures who have made such requests and takes prompt and effective measures to accommodate their missions. In this context, we note that Turkmenistan accepted recommendations during the third UPR cycle to facilitate all pending requests for visits by special procedure mandate holders and to develop a schedule for their visits (recommendations 116.28, 116.30, 116.32 of the Report of the Working Group on the UPR, as accepted by Turkmenistan as per addendum 1).

The requests from a number of UN special procedures to visit Turkmenistan are currently pending, with some of these requests initially having been made over a decade ago. It is our understanding that there in recent years have been discussions on this issue between the Government of Turkmenistan and individual mandate holders, in particular the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, but that no new visit has been finally agreed and scheduled.

While the current situation related to the global COVID-19 pandemic has created logistic and other challenges for UN special procedures to conduct country missions, these procedures nevertheless continue to carry out their mandates and to plan and prepare for forthcoming country visits. Thus, also at this time, it is essential that Turkmenistan cooperates with special procedures on the planning and preparation of country missions with a view to ensuring that such missions can take place as soon as possible when the circumstances permit. In addition, it is particularly relevant at this time that Turkmenistan cooperates with UN special procedures in other ways, including by taking concrete measures in response to concerns raised in communications addressed by them to the Government.

In view of the above, we call on your Ministry and the Government of Turkmenistan to:

- Accept the requests of all UN special procedures who have asked to visit the country, including the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, the Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and others.
- Work closely with the different special procedures on facilitating, planning and preparing for their visits to Turkmenistan at the earliest possible dates with account of the COVID-19 related situation; and draw up a plan/schedule for these visits together with the relevant mandate holders.

- Ensure that the different special procedures are able to carry out forthcoming visits in full accordance with their terms of reference, including by having confidential and unsupervised contacts with civil society representatives, witnesses and other private persons, and enjoying full access to all places considered necessary for the fulfilment of their mandates.
- Cooperate constructively with the special procedures on the implementation of all aspects of their mandates and take concrete measures to implement their recommendations, including those issued in the context of country visits.
- Provide assurances that no one who has been in contact with special procedure mandate holders or provided information to them about the human rights situation in Turkmenistan will suffer threats, harassment or punishment for doing so.

We thank you for your attention to the issues raised in this letter.

Sincerely,

Farid Tuhbatullin, TIHR Chair
Brigitte Dufour, IPHR Director