

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 8, 2016

His Excellency Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow
President of the Republic Of Turkmenistan
c/o H.E. Meret Orazov, Ambassador
Embassy of the Republic of Turkmenistan
2207 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20008

Dear President Berdimuhamedow:

July 7, 2016 marked one year since Saparmamed Nepeskuliev, a contributor to RFE/RL's Turkmen Service, was imprisoned in your country. We believe his imprisonment is unlawful and are writing to urge his release.

Mr. Nepeskuliev courageously reported about economic development, infrastructure, social services, and education in Turkmenistan's western regions with the aim of informing citizens about challenges facing their communities and helping them improve their lives. He was detained and held incommunicado in July 2015, before being convicted of fabricated narcotics charges and sentenced to three years in prison in closed proceedings in a Turkmenbashi city court on August 31, 2015.

Mr. Nepeskuliev's case has been reviewed by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, which in 2015 designated his detention "arbitrary" and called for his immediate release, declaring that "the [Turkmen] Government failed to demonstrate that Mr. Nepeskuliev was tried, convicted and sentenced in a due process." Numerous rights groups have protested his detention on humanitarian grounds, citing deteriorating health, his isolation, and lack of any access to family members or lawyers. Indeed, some groups have questioned whether he is alive. We are aware that EU officials raised his case in May 2016, during annual bilateral human rights consultations with Turkmenistan. The OSCE, Freedom House, Human Rights Watch, Committee to Protect Journalists, and Reporters Without Borders have condemned his detention and demanded his release.

As members of the U.S. Congress, we have vowed to promote and protect the same international conventions and standards guaranteeing international law and human rights that Turkmenistan has pledged to uphold. Our support of RFE/RL, and its journalists around the world, is part of that commitment.

During these days as the United States of America celebrates its own independence, we appeal to you, Mr. President, to release a journalist who has been arbitrarily imprisoned and deserves his freedom.

Sincerely,



Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress



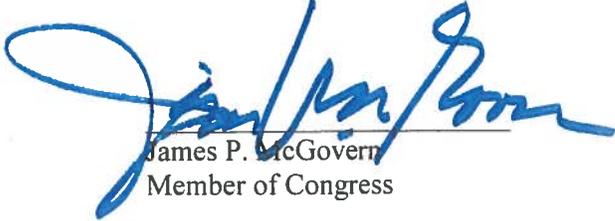
William R. Keating
Member of Congress



Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress



Daniel Lipinski
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Joseph R. Pitts
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress