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Президент БЕРДЫМУХАММЕДОВ ГУРБАНГУЛЫ МЯЛИКГУЛЫЕВИЧ
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October 27, 2009

Dear President Berdymukhammedov:

We are writing to express our concern about the October 20, 2009 arrest of Mr. Andrey Zatoka, who is being detained in prison in Dashovuz on charges of inflicting bodily harm. His trial is scheduled for this Thursday, October 29, and the international environmental community is concerned that he will not be given a fair trial. If Mr. Zatoka's case does go to trial, we respectfully request that you allow full access to the trial, including by international observers and the media.

However, we are writing to you to appeal to your sense of justice and ask that you please immediately dismiss all charges against Mr. Zatoka and unconditionally release him to his family.

Mr. Zatoka is a well respected environmentalist who has contributed enormously to the Turkmen, Central Asian and international environmental movements. He is a founding member of the International Socio-Ecological Union, founder of the Dashovuz Ecology Club, and has worked with many international environmental organizations including the United Nations. He is a biologist who graduated from Ural State University and has worked in Turkmenistan protecting the environment for over 20 years.

Mr. Zatoka's detainment causes great anxiety and concern among his friends and colleagues around the globe and creates a negative image of Turkmenistan in the eyes of the world. We are concerned for his safety and are closely monitoring his situation as well as the overall human rights situation in Turkmenistan. Since his previous wrongful arrest in 2006, Mr. Zatoka has been unable to leave Turkmenistan, his travel inside the country has been limited, and he has been followed and subjected to harassment by the local authorities. His recent arrest is the culmination of over 2 years of intimidation.

As Turkmenistan celebrates its independence, we urge you to demonstrate your respect for human rights and the rule of law and stop the violation of Mr. Zatoka's human rights immediately.

Sincerely,



Kate Watters
Executive Director