

Dear Ms Lopez,

We are dismayed to hear reports that you performed in Turkmenistan on June 29 for President Berdymukhamedov's birthday. As you are now no doubt aware, Turkmenistan possesses one of the worst human rights' records, and is amongst the most authoritarian countries in the world. The US State Department's 2012 Report on Human Rights in Turkmenistan notes examples of "arbitrary arrest; torture; and disregard for civil liberties, including restrictions on freedoms of speech, press, assembly, and movement. [...] Other continuing human rights problems included citizens' inability to change their government; interference in the practice of religion; denial of due process and fair trial; arbitrary interference with privacy, home, and correspondence; discrimination and violence against women; trafficking in persons; and restrictions on the free association of workers."

Your publicist has since stated that, had you been aware of the country's human rights' issues, you would not have performed there. It is difficult to understand why you would consider accepting such a concert without apparently conducting google searches on both your destination and the authoritarian ruler you performed for.

You recently tweeted to raise awareness for child healthcare in Panama, an admirable issue that deserves both your support and that of your followers. Unfortunately, healthcare in Turkmenistan is severely lacking; according to the World Bank, infant mortality in Turkmenistan in 2011 was 45 deaths per 1000 live births – higher than the infant mortality rate of Iraq and Bangladesh, and over two and a half times higher than in Panama. Meanwhile, money that should be spent on the Turkmen people is being wasted on vainglorious prestige projects such as Avaza, the 'tourist' complex you reportedly performed in on June 29. These projects are of little benefit to the general populace of Turkmenistan.

We believe that your appearance in Turkmenistan not only legitimises a corrupt and authoritarian regime, but also damages your image as an artist who cares about human rights. In light of this, we feel it is only right for you to donate any fee you received for playing this concert to a charity that works to improve the human rights' situation in Turkmenistan, such as the Arzuw Foundation's Arzuw Scholars program, or a similar organisation.

Yours sincerely,

Gavin Hayman, Director of Campaigns, Global Witness
David J. Kramer, President, Freedom House
Bjørn Engesland, Secretary General, Norwegian Helsinki Committee
Farid Tuhbatullin, Turkmen Initiative for Human Rights
Brigitte Dufour, Director, International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR)
Lyudmyla Kozlovska, President, Open Dialog Foundation
Michael Laubsch, Executive Director, Eurasian Transition Group
Kate Watters, Executive Director, Crude Accountability