

Türkiye: Turkmen Risking Deportation Reported Missing

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Don't Send Them to Turkmenistan

(Berlin) – Two [Turkmen](#) dissident bloggers have been missing since July 24, 2025, when they were reportedly released from a [Turkish](#) deportation center, Human Rights Watch said today. Turkish authorities should ensure that the bloggers, Alisher Sakhatov and Abdulla Orusov, are not returned to Turkmenistan, where they would be at grave risk of torture and arbitrary imprisonment.

Sakhatov and Orusov had been held in deportation centers since police [arrested](#) them on April 28. On June 13, a trial court upheld the migration authorities' orders to deport them, but on July 14, the Constitutional Court issued a ruling temporarily suspending the deportation order and immediately notified the Turkish migration authority to comply. On July 24, the deportation center in Edirne issued documents to release them.

“Alisher Sakhatov and Abdulla Orusov may be in grave danger of physical harm in Türkiye or of secretly being expelled to Turkmenistan,” said [Rachel Denber](#), deputy Europe and Central Asia director at Human Rights Watch. “Turkish authorities should ensure a swift and effective investigation into the men's disappearance and ensure that they are not sent to Turkmenistan, where they face serious risk of persecution.”

The Turkmen Helsinki Fund for Human Rights, a Bulgaria-based group, told Human Rights Watch that Sakhatov's last known communication was with his wife, Gullala Hasanova, in a phone call on the evening of July 24, while he was still in the deportation center. On July 28, Hasanova filed a missing person's report with the police in Sinop, where the couple live, who opened an investigation into the men's disappearance. The organization said that police told Hasanova that as of July 28, neither Sakhatov nor Orusov was known to have crossed Türkiye's international borders, and that they were not in any Turkish detention site. On July 29, the prosecutor's office in Sinop opened a criminal investigation on the men's disappearance.

The investigation should not exclude the possibility that the men are being held unlawfully in Türkiye by Turkmen agents or their proxies.

In recent years, Sakhatov and Orusov have maintained online social media platforms on which they have openly criticized Turkmen government policies.

Government critics in Turkmenistan [face](#) repeated [harassment](#) and [intimidation](#). The justice system completely lacks independence and transparency. [Torture](#) is widespread and dozens of people have been forcibly disappeared in Turkmen prisons, some for more than 20 years. The Turkmen government routinely imposes informal and arbitrary travel bans on various groups, including activists and relatives of exiled dissidents.

Sakhatov and Orusov's public criticism of the Turkmen government puts them at immediate risk of persecution and torture and other ill-treatment upon return to Turkmenistan, Human Rights Watch said.

Human Rights Watch also said the men are at risk of violence and other harm in Türkiye by presumed proxies of Turkmen authorities. Turkmen authorities have a long [record](#) of harassing and intimidating activists abroad as well as their families in Turkmenistan.

Human Rights Watch has documented several incidents in which unidentified assailants beat Turkmen activists in Istanbul. In 2022, six men [beat](#) five Turkmen activists in the courtyard of the Turkmen consulate. The activists, whom consular staff [admitted](#) onto the premises, were attempting to deliver a letter to President Serdar Berdymukhamedov regarding the dire situation many Turkmen migrants face abroad.

In 2021, three unidentified male assailants speaking Turkmen [attacked](#) three Turkmen activists shortly after one of them had visited the Turkmen consulate seeking to renew his passport, injuring the man seeking to have his passport renewed. Other human rights defenders have [documented](#) additional violent attacks that took place in 2021.

Hasanova and Sakhatov's lawyer have both requested access to surveillance video feed from the Edirne deportation center.

Turkmen.News, a Netherlands-based independent outlet, published a report that Sakhatov and Orsuov had been extradited to Turkmenistan on July 28, while also stating that the report could not be confirmed. Human Rights Watch does not have information about any criminal charges that Turkmen authorities may have brought against the two men or about any extradition request.

Even if Turkish authorities have received an extradition request, the Constitutional Court ruling would bar them from extraditing the men to Turkmenistan until the court "can access information and documentation to assess the risks to life or physical and mental integrity of Orusov and Sakhatov [which they] might face in case of deportation." The ruling, which Human Rights Watch has examined, states that the court suspended the deportation to prevent any irreversible harm that would result from deportation while the court conducts its assessment.

Türkiye's treaty obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the 1951 Refugee Convention also require it to uphold the principle of nonrefoulement, which prohibits the return of anyone to a place where they would face a real risk of persecution, torture or other ill-treatment, or a threat to life.

"Every additional minute that Sakhatov and Orusov remain missing deepens the alarm for their lives and well-being," Denber said. "Turkish authorities should spare no effort to find them and ensure their safety."