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Paris, 11 December 2008

Dear Mr. President,

With three days to go to Turkmenistan's parliamentary elections, Reporters Without Borders would like to raise several matters relating to press freedom and human rights with you.

As you know, your installation as president on 14 February 2007 raised many hopes about the government's democratisation, but no significant progress has so far been made. These elections, in which independent candidates have found it very hard to run, highlight the extremely limited nature of the measures that have been taken. And we have been told that pressure on independent journalists has increased.

Mr. President, the time has come for Turkmenistan and its people to implement reforms that show a real political desire for liberalisation. Only such reforms will enable Turkmenistan's integration into the international community, the development of its economy and an improvement in the living standards of its inhabitants.

The degree to which the Turkmen population is cut off from the world is dramatic. There is an urgent need to end this isolation. For this reason, Reporters Without Borders would like to reiterate its appeal to your government to undertake to:

- free political prisoners and imprisoned journalists, including Annakurban Amanklychev and Sapardurdy Khajiyev
- abolish censorship
- allow the creation of privately-owned news media
- allow the foreign news media to operate in Turkmenistan
- allow unmonitored access to an uncensored Internet
- allow NGOs to operate in Turkmenistan.

We have on several occasions offered you our help in the area in which we are specialised – freedom of the press. We reiterate our offer today and we hope that we will soon be able to begin a productive dialogue on these issues.

I thank you in advance for giving this request your careful consideration.

Respectfully,

Jean-François Julliard
Secretary-General
