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U.S. Department of State

Turkmenistan Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1997

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TURKMENISTAN

Turkmenistan, a one-party state dominated by its President and his closest advisers, made little progress in moving from a Soviet-era authoritarian style of government to a democratic system. Saparmurad Niyazov, head of the Turkmen Communist Party since 1985 and President of Turkmenistan since its independence in October 1990, may legally remain in office until 2002. The Democratic Party, the renamed Communist Party, retained a monopoly on power; the Government registered no parties in 1997 and continued to repress all opposition political activities. Emphasizing stability and gradual reform, official nation-building efforts focused on fostering Turkmen nationalism and glorification of President Niyazov. In practice the President controls the judicial system, and the 50-member unicameral Parliament (Mejlis) has no genuinely independent authority.

The Committee on National Security (KNB) has the responsibilities formerly held by the Soviet Committee for State Security (KGB), namely, to ensure that the regime remains in power through tight control of society and discouragement of dissent. The Ministry of Internal Affairs directs the criminal police, which works closely with the KNB on matters of national security. Both operate with relative impunity and have been responsible for abusing the rights of individuals as well as enforcing the Government's policy of repressing political opposition.

Turkmenistan is largely desert with cattle and sheep raising, intensive agriculture in irrigated oases, and huge oil and gas reserves. Its economy remains dependent on central planning mechanisms and state control, although the Government has taken a number of potentially significant steps to make the transition to a market economy. Agriculture, particularly cotton cultivation, accounts for nearly half of

total employment. Gas, oil and gas derivatives, and cotton account for almost all of the country's export revenues. Seeking increased outlets for its gas exports (and, thereby, greater economic independence), the Government is considering construction of new gas export pipelines to or through a number of countries, including neighboring Iran and Afghanistan.

The Government continued to commit human rights abuses, and the authorities in particular severely restricted political and civil liberties. Citizens do not have the ability to change their government peacefully. Dissident Durdymurad Khodzha-Mukhammed remains in a psychiatric hospital in Geok-Depe, and dissident Ata Aymamedov is still imprisoned for calling for the President's removal from office. Senior government officials failed to respond to inquiries regarding these two cases. Security forces continued to beat and otherwise mistreat suspects and prisoners, and prison conditions remained poor and unsafe. Arbitrary arrest, detention, unfair trials, and interference with citizens privacy remained problems. The Government completely controls the media, censoring all newspapers and rarely permitting independent criticism of government policy or officials. The Government generally gave favored treatment to ethnic Turkmen over minorities and to men over women. Women experience societal discrimination, and domestic violence against women is a problem.

The recently amended law on religion reaffirmed a number of important religious freedoms but also tightens government control of religious groups. The requirement that religious organizations have at least 500 members to be legally registered has prevented some minority religions from legally establishing themselves.

The Institute for Democratization and Human Rights, given a mandate to conduct research in support of the democratization of the Turkmen government and society and to monitor the protection of human rights, completed its first year of operation in October. During the year, it continued to develop its research and monitoring activities. Early in 1997, it conducted inspections of prisons, and several reforms resulted from these inspections.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

a. Political and Other Extrajudicial Killing

There were no reports of political or other extrajudicial killings.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The 1992 Constitution makes torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment illegal. Nevertheless, there were credible and widespread reports that security officials frequently beat criminal suspects and prisoners and often used force to obtain confessions. Security forces also used denial of medical treatment and food, verbal intimidation, and placement in unsanitary conditions.

International human rights organizations reported that dissident Durdymurad Khodzha-Mukhammed (arrested by authorities in 1995) remains in a psychiatric hospital in Geok-Depe for nonmedical reasons. Others who have protested government policies or economic conditions also reportedly are held in

psychiatric hospitals.

Prison conditions are poor, and prisons are unsanitary, overcrowded, and unsafe. Food is poor, and infectious diseases are rampant. Facilities for prisoner rehabilitation and recreation are extremely limited. In the past, some prisoners have died due to overcrowding, untreated illness, and lack of adequate protection from the severe summer heat.

Although in the past year diplomats have been permitted to visit selected prisons and detention centers, the Government does not permit unrestricted independent monitoring of prison conditions.

d. Arbitrary Arrest, Detention, or Exile

The Constitution states that citizens "have the right to freedom of belief and the free expression thereof and also to obtain information unless it is a state, official, or commercial secret." In practice those expressing views critical of or different from those of the Government have been arrested on false charges of committing common crimes, such as Ata Aymamedov (see Section 1.e.).

The precise number of political detainees held at year's end was unknown. Pretrial detainees are held 6 to 8 months on the average. Several thousand people, many of them arrested for narcotics-related crimes, were released from prison under a presidential amnesty act partly intended as an effort to release untried detainees.

Forced exile was not known to have occurred in 1997. However, almost all prominent political opponents of the present Government have chosen to move to either Moscow, Stockholm, or Prague for reasons of personal safety; none returned this year.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The Constitution provides for judicial independence. However, in practice, the judiciary is not independent; the President's power to select and dismiss judges subordinates the judiciary to the Presidency. The President appoints all judges for a term of

5 years. The appointments are without legislative review, except for the Chairman (Chief Justice) of the Supreme Court, and the President has the sole authority to remove them from the bench before the completion of their terms.

The court system has not been reformed since the Soviet era. It consists of a Supreme Court, 6 provincial courts (including 1 for the city of Ashgabat only), and, at the lowest level, 61 district and city courts. A Supreme Economic Court hears cases involving disputes between state-owned enterprises and ministries, and, increasingly, commercial disputes. The Government abolished all military courts in May. Criminal offenses committed by members of the armed forces are now tried in civilian courts under the authority of the office of the Prosecutor General.

The law provides for the rights of due process for defendants, including a public trial, the right to a defense attorney, access to accusatory material, and the right to call witnesses to testify on behalf of the accused. In practice these rights are often denied by authorities, and there are no independent lawyers, with the exception of a few retired legal officials, available to represent defendants. When a person cannot afford the services of a lawyer, the court appoints one. A person may represent himself in court.

Lower courts' decisions may be appealed, and in the case of the death penalty the defendant may petition

the President for clemency. The President granted clemency to several hundred people in 1997 in connection with the general amnesty, which released several thousand inmates from prison (see Section 1.d.). In practice adherence to due process is not uniform, particularly in the lower courts in rural areas. Even when due process rights are observed, the authority of the prosecutor vis-a-vis the defense attorney is so great that it is very difficult for the defendant to receive a fair trial.

In September the Government held at least 10 political prisoners, including 1 dissident committed to a psychiatric hospital for nonmedical reasons. According to Human Rights Watch, at least two other dissidents were also held in psychiatric hospitals. Of the current convicted political prisoners, eight were involved in the July 1995 demonstration. Two others were convicted in secret before the Supreme Court in 1995 for an alleged conspiracy to assassinate the President. Dissident Ata Aymamedov was sentenced in February 1996 to 4½ years' imprisonment for "hooliganism" after he criticized the President in a private conversation. He reportedly claimed that the only way to improve the country's situation would be to remove the President from office. The authorities tried and imprisoned him on the day of his arrest.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The Constitution provides for the right of protection from arbitrary interference by the State in a citizen's personal life. However, there are no legal means to regulate the conduct of surveillance by the state security apparatus, which regularly monitors the activities of opponents and critics of the Government. Security officials use physical surveillance, telephone tapping, electronic eavesdropping, and the recruitment of informers. Critics of the Government, and many other people, report credibly that their mail is intercepted before delivery.

The Government restricts citizens' ability to obtain foreign newspapers (see Section 2.a.).

In the past, the authorities have dismissed children from school and removed adults from their jobs because of the political activities of relatives. Since his trial, the Government has reportedly persecuted Ata Aymamedov's entire family in this way. The authorities also threaten supporters of opposition political movements with loss of employment and homes (see Section 2.b.).

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The Constitution provides for the right to hold personal convictions and to express them freely. In practice, however, the Government severely restricts freedom of speech and does not permit freedom of the press. Continued criticism of the Government can lead to personal hardship, including loss of opportunities for advancement and employment.

The Government completely controls radio and television. Its budget funds almost all print media. The Government censors newspapers; the Committee for the Protection of State Secrets must approve prepublication galleys. The two nominally independent newspapers established under presidential decree, Adalat (Justice) and Galkynysh (Revival) continue to operate. Although both newspapers profess to be independent, their content is censored. Russian language newspapers from abroad are generally available only to organizations by subscription; individuals are rarely able to subscribe. Individual issues are available in at least one Ashgabat hotel, but are sometimes confiscated from passengers arriving at international airports.

The Government prohibits the media from reporting the views of opposition political leaders and critics,

and it rarely allows even the mildest form of criticism in print. The Government has subjected those responsible for critical foreign press items to threats and harassment. After publishing a series of articles critical of the Government in the Russian newspaper Pravda in 1996, journalist Marat Durdyev was fired from three state jobs: at the state-owned newspaper; an archeological site; and a state school; he also was harassed by the KNB and other government organs. The Government revoked the accreditation of the Radio Liberty correspondent in 1996 because of broadcasts by an opposition politician in exile, but it did not prevent him from continuing to file reports for broadcast in 1997.

Following his arrest on October 30, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty correspondent Yowshan Annakurbanov was released from a KNB prison on November 12. Annakurbanov reportedly was not physically harmed but remained under investigation at year's end for allegedly attempting to smuggle "military secrets" out of the country. Reportedly, he also was forbidden to leave his apartment, meet with journalists and foreign officials, or discuss his case. An article containing inaccurate statements about RFE/RL and a negative depiction of Annakurbanov's case appeared in the officially sanctioned daily newspaper Neutral Turkmenistan on November 14.

Intellectuals have reported that the security organs have instructed them to praise the President in their art and have warned them not to participate in receptions hosted by foreign diplomatic missions.

The Government also restricts academic freedom. It does not tolerate criticism of government policy or the President in academic circles, and it discourages research into areas it considers politically sensitive. The government-controlled Union of Writers has in the past expelled members who have criticized government policy; libraries have removed their works.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The Constitution allows for peaceful assembly and association, but the Government restricts these rights. It does not permit peaceful demonstrations organized by alleged critics and in 1995 dispersed the first peaceful protest rally in years, convicting over 20 persons for their participation. According to Amnesty International, 8 of the original 20 convicted demonstrators remain in jail. Permits are required for public meetings and demonstrations. There were reports of spontaneous demonstrations over bread prices in 1996, but none in 1997.

A few unregistered organizations without political agendas are permitted to function publicly. Unregistered organizations with a political agenda are not allowed to hold demonstrations or meetings outside, but can hold small private meetings. No political groups critical of government policy have been able to meet the requirements for registration. The Government uses laws on the registration of political parties to prevent the emergence of potential opposition groups. At present the only registered political party is the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan.

Social and cultural organizations without political aims are allowed to function, but often have difficulty registering. Theoretically, citizens have the freedom to associate with whomever they please. However, the authorities have fired or threatened to fire supporters of opposition movements from their jobs, removed them from professional societies, and even threatened them with the loss of their homes. In addition some citizens with links to foreigners are subject to official intimidation.

c. Freedom of Religion

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and does not establish a State religion. The State generally respects religious freedom. Citizens are overwhelmingly Muslim, but Islam does not play a

dominant role in society, in part due to the 70 years of Soviet rule.

A modest revival of Islam has occurred since independence. The Government has incorporated some aspects of Muslim tradition into its efforts to define a Turkmen identity, and it gives some financial and other support to the Council on Religious Affairs, which plays an intermediary role between the government bureaucracy and religious organizations.

Religious congregations are required to register with the Government. While reaffirming a number of important religious freedoms, the Law on the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations, amended in 1995 and again in 1996, also provides for significant government control of religion. For example, the requirement that religious organizations have at least 500 adherents to be legally registered has prevented all but Sunni Muslims and Russian Orthodox Christians from setting up legal religious organizations. This restriction has caused problems for a number of minority religions, especially the Baha'i, who have been prevented from conducting services. A member of a Ashgabat religious group reported that on several occasions, law enforcement officials raided the Baptist church where the group conducted meetings, confiscated religious material, and warned church authorities against permitting unregistered religious groups from meeting in its facilities. Diplomats received similar reports of raids and seizures of religious materials at Protestant churches in other areas of the country.

While protected by law, proselytization by "foreign" (i.e., non-Sunni Muslim) religions can incur official displeasure. Missionaries arriving at Ashgabat International Airport with large quantities of religious material have had the material confiscated. Government officials acknowledge this practice, stating that the quantities are clearly for proselytizing and not for personal use. Hare Krishnas arriving from Uzbekistan have had their religious material confiscated. Government permission is required for any mass meetings or demonstrations for religious purposes. However, the Government does not restrict the travel of clergy or members of religious groups to Turkmenistan. Islamic religious literature is distributed through the mosques. Orthodox churches offer a variety of Christian religious literature.

d. Freedom of Movement Within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

The Government does not generally restrict movement within the country, although travel to southern border zones is tightly controlled. Citizens still carry internal passports. These documents are used primarily as a form of identification, rather than as a means of controlling movement. Residence permits are not required, although place of residence is registered and noted in passports.

The Government uses its power to issue passports and exit visas as a general means of restricting international travel. Most nonofficial travelers find the process of obtaining passports and exit visas to be difficult. Many allege that officials solicit bribes in exchange for permission to travel abroad. This year the Government introduced new passports which will eventually serve as combined foreign and internal travel documents.

Most citizens are permitted to emigrate without undue restriction. In 1996 some government opponents were denied the opportunity to emigrate; however, there were no reports of similar government action in 1997. In 1997 ethnic Russians and other non-Turkmen residents, including Jewish residents, have been permitted to emigrate.

The government-funded Council of World Turkmen provides assistance to ethnic Turkmen abroad who wish to return to Turkmenistan and apply for citizenship. The Government, however, discourages immigration by ethnic Turkmen living in Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and other countries. Immigration of non-Turkmen from other areas of the former Soviet Union is discouraged by the unofficial policy of favoring

employment of ethnic Turkmen.

On June 12, the Government adopted the 1951 United Nations Convention and its 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, but its accession to the Convention has not yet been approved by the U.N. The law on refugees was also adopted on June 12. It establishes the procedure and conditions for recognizing refugee status, and sets the legal, economic, and social rights of refugees.

The country does not provide first asylum, and the issue of its provision has never arisen. The Government has never granted refugee or asylee status to individuals, but some ethnic Turkmen from Afghanistan have been resettled.

The Government cooperates with the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees.

There were no confirmed reports of forced expulsion of those having a valid claim to refugee status. There have been unconfirmed reports of small numbers of refugees being forcibly returned by individual border guards. According to the UNHCR, however, there is no clear pattern of abuse or forced expulsion of refugees, with the exception of such low-level harassment.

Section 3 Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

Citizens have no real ability to effect peaceful change in the Government and have little influence on government policy or decisionmaking. The 1992 Constitution declares Turkmenistan to be a secular democracy in the form of a presidential republic. It calls for the separation of powers between the various branches of government, but vests a disproportionate share of power in the Presidency. In practice President Niyazov's power is absolute, and the country remains a one-party state. Despite

the appearance of decisionmaking by consensus, most decisions are made at the presidential level.

In the 1992 presidential election, the sole candidate was Saparmurad Niyazov, the incumbent and nominee of the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan. The Government announced the election barely a month before voting day, giving opposition groups insufficient time to organize and qualify to submit a candidate. A 1994 national referendum extended the President's term to

2002, obviating the need for the scheduled presidential election in 1997. According to the official results, 99.9 percent of those voting cast their ballots to extend his term. The policy of the Democratic Party, according to its leadership, is to implement the policy of the President.

In the 1994 elections for a reconstituted Mejlis (Parliament), no opposition participation was permitted. The Government claimed that 99.8 percent of all eligible voters participated. The Mejlis routinely supports presidential decrees, and, as yet, has no genuine independence, although it has taken several measures to become a more professional body and does debate and amend draft legislation, including key bills such as civil and criminal codes. The next parliamentary elections are scheduled for 1999.

There are no legal restrictions on the participation of women or minorities in the political process. Women hold the positions of Minister of Textile Industry, Prosecutor General, Deputy Chairperson of Parliament, and the Ambassador to the U.N. There are no women serving as provincial governors. Minorities are represented in the Government although preference is given to ethnic Turkmen.

Section 4 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of

Alleged Violations of Human Rights

There are no local human rights monitoring groups, and government restrictions on freedom of speech, press, and association would preclude any effort to investigate and criticize publicly the Government's human rights policies. Several independent journalists based in Russia report on these issues in the Russian press and have contact with international human rights organizations. On numerous occasions the past, the Government has warned its critics against speaking with visiting journalists or other foreigners wishing to discuss human rights issues.

The National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights under the President completed its first year of operation in October. Its mandate is to support the democratization of the government and society and monitor the protection of human rights. Beginning in December 1996, Institute personnel led an investigative tour of prisons and of regional and local government offices, reporting to the President on substandard prison conditions and abuses by regional and local authorities. The investigation led to the general amnesty and Criminal Code changes. The Institute maintains two full time staff members and also played an active role in receiving and resolving citizen complaints of arbitrary government action. Approximately 1400 complaints have been filed with the Institute and, reportedly, over 50 percent concern the judicial process and judges but there are no specific statistics on the number of complaints against law enforcement and security organizations. In general the Institute conducts a study and returns its findings to the individual and the organizations involved. The Institute, however, is not an independent body, and the full scope of its prospective activities remained unclear at year's end.

Section 5 Discrimination Based on Race, Sex, Religion, Disability, Language, or Social Status

The Constitution provides for equal rights and freedoms for all, independent of one's nationality, origin, language, and religion. It further specifies equal rights before the law for both men and women. There is no legal basis for discrimination against women or religious or ethnic minorities. Cultural traditions and the Government's policy of promoting Turkmen nationalism, however, limit the employment and educational opportunities of women and nonethnic Turkmen.

Women

Anecdotal reports indicate that domestic violence against women is common, but no statistics are available. The subject is not discussed in society. There are no court cases available and no references to domestic violence in the media. One unofficial group to support battered women operates in Ashgabat.

Women are underrepresented in the upper levels of state-owned economic enterprises and are concentrated in the health care and education professions and in service industries. Women are restricted from working in some dangerous and environmentally unsafe jobs. Under the law, women enjoy the same inheritance and marriage rights as men. In traditional Turkmen society, however, the woman's primary role is as homemaker and mother, and family pressures often limit opportunities for women to enter outside careers and advance their education. Religious authorities, when proffering advice to practicing Muslims on matters concerning inheritance and property rights, often favor men over women.

There is only one officially registered women's group, headed by the Deputy Chairperson of the Mejlis and dedicated in honor of the President's mother. The Government has no program specifically aimed at rectifying the disadvantaged position of women in society, as it does not acknowledge that women discrimination.

Children

Turkmenistan's social umbrella covers the welfare needs of children. The Government provides 9 to 10 years of education for the nation's children. Generally, there is little difference in the education provided to girls and boys. The Government has not taken effective steps to address the environmental and health problems that have resulted in a high rate of infant and maternal mortality.

During the annual cotton harvest, some schools in agricultural areas are closed and children as young as 10 years of age work in the cotton fields (see Section 6.d.). Other than this activity, there is no societal pattern of abuse against children.

People With Disabilities

Government subsidies and pensions are provided for those with disabilities, although the pensions are inadequate to maintain a decent standard of living. Those capable of working are generally provided with jobs under still-valid preindependence policies that virtually guarantee employment to all. According to existing legislation, facilities for the access of the disabled must be included in new construction projects. Compliance is spotty, however, and most older buildings are not so equipped. Care for the mentally retarded and mentally ill is handled on the local level. Mentally retarded and mentally ill children are placed in boarding schools with educational and future employment opportunities if their condition is mild. Adults with disabilities requiring institutionalization are kept primarily in "psycho-narcological" hospitals in Geok-Depe, Bekrova, and Kava, and in theory provided with food, clothing, and medical care.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

The Constitution provides for equal rights and freedoms for all citizens. Turkmen comprise approximately 77 percent of the population of about 4.5 million; Russians, 7 percent; and Uzbeks, 9 percent. There are smaller numbers of Kazakhs, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, and many other ethnic groups. Since independence, Turkmenistan has not experienced ethnic turmoil.

As part of its nation-building efforts, the Government has attempted to foster Turkmen national pride, in part through its language policy. The Constitution designates Turkmen the official language, and it is a mandatory subject in school, although not necessarily the language of instruction.

The Constitution also provides for the rights of speakers of other languages to use them. Russian remains in common usage in government and commerce. The Government insists that discrimination against Russian speakers will not be tolerated. However, efforts to reverse past policies that favored Russians work to the benefit of Turkmen at the expense of the other ethnic groups, not solely ethnic Russians. Non-Turkmen fear that the designation of Turkmen as the official language will put their children at a disadvantage educationally and economically. They complain that some avenues for promotion and job advancement are no longer open to them. Only a handful of non-Turkmen occupy high-echelon jobs in the ministries, and government employees from minority ethnic groups are sometimes assigned lesser positions than their experience and qualifications would merit.

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

Turkmenistan has inherited the Soviet system of government-associated trade unions. There are no legal guarantees entitling workers to form or join unions. The Colleagues Union is the only legal central trade union federation permitted, and it claims a membership of 1.6 million; its unions are divided along both

sectoral and regional lines. Unions may not form or join other federations.

While no law specifically prohibits the establishment of independent unions, there are no such unions, and no attempts were made to register an independent trade union during the year.

The law neither prohibits nor permits strikes and does not address the issue of retaliation against strikers. Strikes are extremely rare and no strikes were known to have occurred in 1997.

There is no information on union affiliation with international unions. Turkmenistan joined the International Labor Organization in 1993.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The law does not protect the right to collective bargaining. In practice, in the state-dominated economy, the close association of both the trade union and the state-owned enterprise with the Government seriously limits workers' ability to bargain, and workers often go months without pay or receive their paychecks late.

The Ministry of Economics and Finance prepares general guidelines for wages and sets wages in health care, culture, and some other areas. In other sectors, it allows for some leeway at the enterprise level, taking into account local factors. The Government determines specific wage and benefit packages for each factory or enterprise.

The law does not prohibit antiunion discrimination by employers against union members and organizers, and there are no mechanisms for resolving such complaints.

There are no export processing zones.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The Constitution prohibits forced labor. No incidents of compulsory labor were reported.

The Government prohibits forced and bonded labor by children and generally enforces this prohibition effectively, with the exception of cotton harvesting in rural areas.

d. Status of Child Labor Practices and Minimum Age for Employment

The minimum age for employment of children is 16 years; in a few heavy industries it is 18 years. The law prohibits children 16 through 18 years of age from working more than 6 hours per day (the normal workday is 8 hours).

The Government prohibits forced and bonded labor by children and generally enforces this prohibition effectively, with the exception of cotton harvesting in rural areas (see Section 6.c.). A 15-year-old child may work 4 to 6 hours per day, but only with the permission of the trade union and parents. This permission rarely is granted. Violations of child labor laws occur in rural areas during the cotton harvesting season, when teenagers work in the fields and children less than 10 years of age sometimes help with the harvest.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

There is no minimum wage. As of August 1, the average wage in the state sector was approximately \$31 (160,000 manats) per month. While the Government subsidizes the prices of many necessities and provides others free of charge, this wage falls short of the amount required to meet the needs of an average family. Most households are multigenerational, with several members receiving salaries, stipends, or pensions. Even so, many people lack the resources to maintain an adequate diet, and meat is a luxury for most citizens.

The standard legal workweek is 40 hours with 2 days off. Individuals who work fewer hours during the week or are in certain high-level positions may also work on Saturdays.

Turkmenistan inherited from the Soviet era an economic system with substandard working conditions--one in which production took precedence over the health and safety of workers. Industrial workers often labor in an unsafe environment and are not provided proper p