

His Excellency Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov  
Presidential Palace  
Ashgabat  
Turkmenistan

CC:  
His Excellency Yazmyrat Seryaev, Ambassador  
Turkmen Embassy in the United Kingdom  
131 Holland Park Avenue  
Kensington  
London W11 4UT

September 15, 2017

Dear President Berdimuhamedov,

In light of the upcoming 5th Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games to be held in Ashgabat, I kindly ask you to release Turkmen citizen Gaspar Matalaev from prison with immediate effect. The Games will be a moment of international attention on Turkmenistan, and Mr. Matalaev's case has received international outcry, as evidenced by the 62,642<sup>1</sup> signatures from citizens around the world asking he be released.

Mr. Gaspar is a concerned citizen of Turkmenistan, who has been monitoring<sup>2</sup> human rights violations during the cotton harvest. His work has helped draw attention to the offences against international and Turkmen laws during cotton production in Turkmenistan. We call upon you to release Mr. Matalaev and to investigate violations that he has uncovered. He was arrested on October 4, 2016, and has reportedly been subjected to torture by electric current to force him to confess to false charges of minor fraud and bribery attempt.

In April 2017, the United Nations Human Rights Committee called on your government to end the harassment, torture and detention of those "seeking to document forced labour in the cotton harvest such as Gaspar Matalaev."<sup>3</sup>

As an act of goodwill before the large international sports event in your country, please heed the call of [62,642](#) people around the world to release Gaspar Matalaev and investigate instances of forced labour in the annual Turkmen cotton harvest. This act will not only demonstrate your humanity, but also improve the global image of Turkmenistan and its commitment to human rights.

Yours Sincerely,

Joanna Ewart-James  
Executive Director

Abby McGill  
Director of Campaigns

Kirill Boychenko  
Coordinator

**FREEDOMUNITED**



**COTTON CAMPAIGN**  
END FORCED LABOR IN CENTRAL ASIA

<sup>1</sup> These signatures are compiled from two global petitions hosted by the ILRF and Freedom United:

<https://laborrights.z2systems.com/np/clients/laborrights/survey.jsp?surveyId=36> and <https://www.freedomunited.org/advocate/free-gaspar-matalaev/>

<sup>2</sup> For more information, please see monitoring reports here: <https://habartm.org/archives/5844>

<sup>3</sup> Human Rights Committee Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Turkmenistan, adopted on 23 March 2017: <https://cdns.freedomunited.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/03165057/Human-Rights-Committee-Turkmenistan-Observations-March-2017.pdf>