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Turkmenistan under scrutiny for human rights violations

HRWF (16.10.2012) - On the 9th of October, the European Parliament Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) heard updates on the present human rights situation in Turkmenistan. The topic is especially pertinent in light of a trade agreement that is currently being negotiated between the Central Asian country and the EU. Turkmenistan must meet several criteria for the agreement to be approved.

One requirement calls for the respect of civil liberties and the strengthening of civil society, a matter for which the country has been roundly criticized. Presenters pointed out that civil society organisations cannot openly operate, registration procedures are very restrictive and those that are approved typically have strong links to the state apparatus.

People from certain minority groups likewise have difficulty to renew their passports. Students that are studying abroad are afraid to return home for the holidays lest they lose their own passports and not be able to return to school. The question of political prisoners was also raised, some of whom have been held for as many as ten years.

President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov is leading his country in becoming more and more isolated from the rest of the world, speakers said. They urged the EU to carefully monitor the process of democratization in the Turkmenistan, especially in light of the trade agreement under consideration. The Turkmenistan government must demonstrate much more political will before the EU can finalise such an accord.
