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**UPR Intervention for Turkmenistan, 16<sup>th</sup> Session April 22, 2013**

The United States welcomes [head of delegation] and the Turkmenistan delegation.

We welcome the efforts to implement the recommendations of UN human rights bodies, to reform the juvenile justice system and to establish criminal penalties for torture.

Nevertheless, we are concerned by continuing reports of the use of excessive force, at times amounting to torture, by security forces to intimidate citizens and coerce confessions. We are particularly concerned by the detention, harassment, and intimidation of journalists, members of religious and ethnic minorities, and civil society representatives who criticize the government or advocate for reform. Government officials are not held accountable for torture or other human rights violations.

We are concerned by the government's restrictions on, and mistreatment of, members of registered and unregistered religious groups. This includes the government's ongoing efforts to arrest, prosecute, and imprison conscientious objectors to mandatory military service.

We are concerned by limitations placed on individuals' freedoms of movement and religion. Those wishing to travel for religious reasons, including to go on Hajj, are barred from exiting the country.

We make the following recommendations:

1. Investigate and, as appropriate, prosecute officials suspected of committing torture or other violations of human rights and punish those who are convicted;
2. Call for and support reform to laws that restrict freedoms of religion and expression; in particular, protect the rights of conscientious objectors and ensure that individuals are not punished for expressing their opinions;
3. Call for and support amending the Law on Migration to comply with ICCPR obligations and guarantee freedom of movement, to include elimination of restrictions on pilgrims wishing to make the Hajj.

delivered by Aleksandra Needham

