

# Human rights defender Gaspar Matalaev turns 35 this month.

## His greatest wish is for the Turkmen Government to release him from his unjust imprisonment.



Alternative Turkmenistan News (ATN) reporter Gaspar Matalaev remains imprisoned on false charges of fraud, despite multiple promises to his family that he would be released. Mr. Matalaev was arrested the night of October 4, 2016, two days after his report on state-orchestrated forced labor of children and adults in Turkmenistan's cotton harvest was posted on ATN's website.

He reportedly confessed to fraud charges while being tortured with electroshocks, though police told him his arrest was related to photographs he posted on the internet.

Mr. Matalaev is one of the few independent monitors working undercover to reveal the state-run nature of forced and child labor during cotton harvests in one of the world's most authoritarian countries. The Government treats refusal to contribute to the cotton harvest as insubordination, incitement to sabotage, and even 'contempt of the homeland.'

I call on the Government of Turkmenistan to release Mr. Matalaev from detention by June 24th, during the traditional period of amnesty, so he may celebrate the Ramadan holiday with his family. Further, I urge you to allow Mr. Matalaev to continue his work as an independent monitor on the use of forced labor in the annual cotton harvest in Turkmenistan, and work with civil society actors like him to end forced labor in your cotton industry.

Sincerely,



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!