

## **Reform in Turkmenistan: A Convenient Facade An Analysis of President Berdymukhammedov's First Four Years in Power**

With this publication, Crude Accountability presents its third report on contemporary Turkmenistan. Analyzing the first four years of President Berdymukhammedov's regime, we attempt to document the current reality inside the country, given the limited access to information that is available to those of us not living in Turkmenistan. We also document the reactions of western leaders and institutions to the façade of reform that President Berdymukhammedov and his administration have created since he was elected President in February 2007. As has been documented elsewhere, Turkmenistan is one of the most repressive countries in the world. On par with Burma, Sudan and North Korea, the country is consistently cited as one of the most repressive nations toward journalists and civil society. It is one of the most corrupt nations according to Transparency International, and its human rights abuses are among the worst in the world. Against this backdrop, we offer a sobering analysis of the first four years of Berdymukhammedov's presidency, focusing on the west's race for access to natural gas and the seeming blindness of virtually every western organization to the ongoing human rights abuses in the country.

Crude Accountability offers this report as a record of the past four years—it is not a comprehensive analysis, but rather a compilation of what we have identified as the most important developments.

The appendix to the report contains dossiers of the major western oil and gas production companies and oil service companies operating in Turkmenistan. This, too, is not a comprehensive list, but, rather, a compilation of the major players and most visible companies operating in the country. As the reader will see, it is often unclear where each company is operating; likewise the scope of each company's operations is often vague. This ambiguity is a reflection of the lack of consistent, detailed information provided by the government of Turkmenistan and the companies operating in country. The result is a murky, unclear snapshot of the industry's presence in Turkmenistan at the present time.

Our colleagues inside Turkmenistan—who cannot speak publicly for fear of severe reprisal against themselves and their families—have repeatedly called for public statements by western diplomats about the human rights abuses in Turkmenistan. Quiet diplomacy has not had the desired effect of nudging the Turkmen regime toward a more democratic society. Human rights concerns have taken a back seat to concerns about

“energy security” in Europe and the west. There is no other way to interpret what is currently happening in the west’s engagement with Turkmenistan and other countries of the Caspian region. Claiming that engagement with western countries and petroleum corporations is preferable to letting the Chinese run rampant over the region is also a hollow argument. The pretense of concern for democracy while simultaneously dealing with corrupt oligarchic governments creates a cynicism and hostility toward the west that contributes to instability, rather than the “energy security” so many western institutions claim to be seeking.

We offer not only documentation of the current state of affairs, but also recommendations for the variety of decision-makers involved in the development of Turkmenistan’s energy resources, including the government of Turkmenistan, western governments, international financial institutions and international oil companies. We urge leaders in each of these sectors to adopt these recommendations in order to ensure that the development of Turkmenistan’s hydrocarbon reserves does not proceed at the expense of its citizens.

For more information on Crude Accountability’s work to advocate for greater transparency and accountability among institutions working in or with Turkmenistan in the energy and environment sector, please visit our website at [www.crudeaccountability.org](http://www.crudeaccountability.org) .