

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

AI Index: EUR 44/005/2007 (Public)
News Service No: 074
17 April 2007

Turkey: Raid on magazine raises spectre of more censorship

Amnesty International is deeply concerned at the raid on 13 April 2007 of the offices of *Nokta* weekly magazine in the Bakirköy district of Istanbul. The organization considers that the fact that it was instigated following a complaint by a military prosecutor represents a worrying development in the already existing pattern of violations of the right to freedom of expression.

The incident reportedly came about following the publication of an article in *Nokta* on 5 April exploring the relationship between certain unnamed civil society groups and the military. The article seemingly aroused suspicion that *Nokta* staff or associates had gained access to confidential military information. Around 50 officers including from the Anti-Terrorism Unit reportedly entered the offices with a search warrant issued by the Bakirköy public prosecutor upon a complaint filed by the military prosecutor in the office of the Chief of the General Staff. While the latter had requested a warrant permitting the confiscation of computers from the magazine's offices, the warrant eventually issued allowed only for files to be copied. Nevertheless, Amnesty International understands that *Nokta* staff were denied access to their computers for a period of time.

The magazine was already under investigation on charges of "discouraging people from military service" and "inciting military personnel to insubordination" following an article published in late March.

Amnesty International recalls the joint statement of four Special Rapporteurs¹, made on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day in May 2006, that, "Journalists are indispensable for disseminating information, promoting debate and facilitating dialogue, activities that constitute the foundation of a democratic society based on a pluralistic approach, where individuals and groups are encouraged to exchange information and express opinions freely." Amnesty International considers the raid on *Nokta's* offices as yet another example of how journalists and others are not left to do their work unhindered. This incident is of particular concern in light of the fact that it was initiated by the military, which the organization fears may represent a pattern of increased military intervention and harassment against those who legitimately express views deemed to be unacceptable.

Amnesty International calls on the Turkish authorities to uphold its obligations under international law to guarantee the right to freedom of expression for all those under its jurisdiction, as enshrined in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to both of which Turkey is a state party.

¹The Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, *Mr. Ambeyi Ligabo*; the Special Rapporteur for freedom of expression of the Organization of American States, *Mr. Ignacio Alvarez*; the Representative on Freedom

of the Media of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Mr. Miklos Haraszi*; and the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, *Ms. Faith Pansy Tlakula*.