

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PUBLIC STATEMENT

AI index: EUR 44/020/2012
23 October 2012

Turkey: Respect the rights of hunger strikers

Amnesty International is concerned at reports that the Turkish authorities are failing to respect the rights of prisoners on hunger strike. Hundreds of prisoners continue to be on hunger strike across dozens of prisons in Turkey, some of them since 12 September. The hunger strikes were initiated as a protest against the authorities' longstanding refusal to allow Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Öcalan to meet with his lawyers and to demand the provision of education in Kurdish.

The hunger strikers are engaging in a peaceful form of protest and the Turkish authorities have an obligation to respect the right to freedom of expression of the prisoners, including their right to protest in such a manner.

Amnesty International is further concerned at reports that prisoners on hunger strike in Silivri and Şakran prisons have been placed in solitary confinement, and that guards at Tekirdağ prison were ill-treating prisoners, as a result of their participation in the hunger strike protests. There are also reports that prison authorities have, at times, restricted prisoners' access to drinking water and to sugar, salt, vitamins and other supplements added to the drinking water consumed by the hunger strikers.

Amnesty International calls on the Turkish authorities to ensure that no punitive measures are taken against prisoners on hunger strike and that the absolute prohibition of torture and other forms of ill-treatment is upheld. The hunger striking prisoners must be provided with adequate access to qualified health professionals and any treatment that they might require. The Turkish authorities should further conduct prompt, thorough, impartial and effective investigations into allegations that prisoners in Silivri, Şakran and Tekirdağ prison were ill-treated, or otherwise punished for their participation in the hunger strikes.