

UA 92/01

Death th**TURKEY Eren Keskin (f), 41] lawyers and leading human
Osman Baydemir, 30] rights defenders**

Two leading members of the Human Rights Association (IHD) are receiving death threats, and Amnesty International believes they are in grave danger.

Eren Keskin, a former IHD vice-president, is now the head of the organization's Istanbul branch. Osman Baydemir, the current vice-president, is also head of the Diyarbak_r branch.

Eren Keskin has received telephone death threats, and calls threatening rape. She is one of the founders of the Legal Aid Project for women raped or sexually abused in custody. On 9 April she learned that a man arrested in Konya had confessed that he had intended to kill her.

Osman Baydemir has reportedly been followed and has received telephone death threats. Plainclothes police officers reportedly came to see him in the Diyarbak_r branch office in November 2000, and told him: "We have lost our patience. There are many people. If we say 'Kill' they will kill".

In early February 2001 Eren Keskin had been part of a delegation who travelled to Silopi, in the southeastern province of __rnak, to investigate the "disappearance" of two members of a Kurdish political party (see UA 26/01, EUR 44/007/2001, and follow-ups). Immediately afterwards, the governor of __rnak reportedly said on TV that "This woman from the IHD came and stirred everything up". After this she received an increased number of telephone death threats on her mobile, at her law firm's office and at the IHD office. In late March, after she had been on a second mission to Silopi, she came to work to find a man waiting for her on each of the three floors of the building as she climbed the stairs to her office. The men did not speak, but stared at her menacingly.

A man who introduced himself as "Sami Demirk_ran" is reportedly calling her regularly, sometimes two or three times a day, saying that he is working with the government and that he wants to see her urgently with nobody else present. She believes she recognizes his voice as that of the man who had threatened to kill former IHD president Ak_n Birdal. Ak_n Birdal had asked her to listen when he received one of the death threats. In May 1998 he was shot in the IHD headquarters in Ankara and barely survived.

Eren Keskin was tried and imprisoned for her human rights activities in 1995, and was adopted as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International. She has been receiving death threats for years. These increased when she represented Abdullah Öcalan, leader of the armed opposition group Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in court in 1999.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The IHD is Turkey's largest human rights organization, with some 19,000 members. At least 10 IHD representatives have been killed since 1991. In most cases the killers have never been identified, and members of the Turkish security forces have been strongly implicated in some of the killings.

The Turkish authorities have tried to discredit the IHD, linking them to the outlawed PKK. Several branches have been closed on various pretexts, and many

senior members have been put on trial. Eren Keskin is currently facing numerous charges, including insulting the army, for criticizing militarism in Turkey in an interview with the weekly journal *Cuma*.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in German, English or your own language:

- urging the Turkish authorities to ensure the safety of Eren Keskin and Osman Baydemir, and to investigate the death threats against them;
- asking that human rights defenders are allowed to pursue their lawful role of monitoring and reporting on human rights matters as set out in the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Defenders Resolution;
- calling on the authorities to take effective action to ensure that the security forces and other public servants recognize the legitimacy of the work of human rights defenders;
- urging that the charges in the trials of the human rights defenders be dropped;
- asking that the branches of the Human Rights Association [IHD] that have been closed are allowed to reopen.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Interior
Mr Saadettin Tantan
_çi_leri Bakanl____
06644 Ankara, Turkey

Telegrams:Interior Minister, Ankara, Turkey

Faxes:+ 90 312 418 17 95

Salutation:Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

State Minister with responsibility for Human Rights
Mr Rü_tü Kaz_m Yücelen
Office of the Prime Minister
Ba_bakanl_k
06573 Ankara
Turkey

Faxes: + 90 312 417 0476

and to diplomatic representatives of Turkey accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 22 May 2001.