

Media Advisory

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Turkey: Conditions in "F-Type" prisons continue to raise alarm

*In a letter to Turkey's Justice Minister, Professor Hikmet Sami Turk, Amnesty International reiterated concerns about conditions in "F-type" prisons and urged the Minister to take immediate steps to end the current *de facto* isolation of several thousand political prisoners.*

Conditions in the "F-type" prisons have been the focus of ongoing protests including a hunger strike which has continued since October 2000 and has resulted in 50 people dying and hundreds suffering serious and long-term health problems. Amnesty International has repeatedly stressed that conditions of small group isolation and solitary confinement carry the risk of serious mental and physical harm and can amount to torture or ill-treatment.

The organization welcomed government moves towards open visits and the use of communal areas, but remains concerned about their implementation. Recent proposals from Turkish human rights defenders to open cell doors during the day so that up to nine prisoners could visit each other were not accepted by the Justice Minister.

*"The Justice Ministry's new provision to allow up to 10 prisoners to communicate for five hours a week is not enough to end *de facto* isolation -- prisoners should be allowed to associate with each other for at least eight hours a day. Furthermore access to communal areas should not be conditional -- prisoners should not have to agree to specific political views and rehabilitation'."*

The organization also said that prisons should be opened for scrutiny by independent monitors, including human rights defenders, doctors and lawyers.

The release of dozens of hunger striking prisoners has reportedly been delayed in spite of reports by the Forensic Institute or hospitals recommending release on medical grounds. Amnesty International urged the Minister to reconsider the situation of those prisoners whose lives are at serious risk if they remain imprisoned without access to necessary medical care.

For the full details of Amnesty's concerns with "F-type" prisons see <http://www.web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/index/eur440242002>

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