

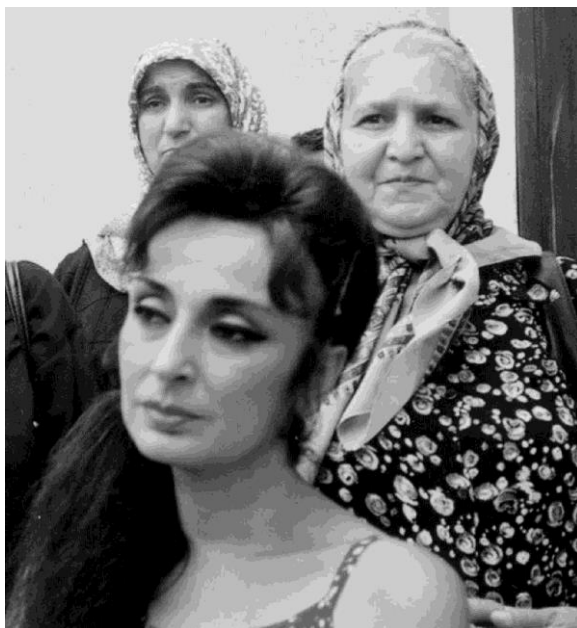
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

TURKEY: APPEAL CASES

5 September 2002; AI Index: EUR 44/51/2002; public

Turkey: Eren Keskin - prosecuted for her activities as a human rights defender

Eren Keskin - head of the Istanbul branch of the Human Rights Association (IHD) and one of the founders of the Legal Aid Project for sexually tortured women - has had dozens of trials and investigations opened against her in relation to her human rights activities.



Lawyer Eren Keskin, *front*, outside the court where she was being prosecuted for statements concerning the alleged sexual torture of a number of women. © AI

In one trial she is accused on the basis of press statements and bulletins on the subject of Kurdish language and culture which were issued by the IHD between January and March 2002. She is charged under Article 169 of the Turkish Penal Code with support for the illegal armed opposition Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK - now known as KADEK) through these publications. The prosecutor alleges that the statements were prepared according to decisions taken by the PKK.

In a second trial she is charged under Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law with having disseminated 'separatist propaganda' in statements made during a panel discussion on 'Violence against Women' held on 25 November 2001.

In a third trial, she is charged - under Article 312 of the Turkish Penal Code - with incitement of hatred for statements on rape and other sexual assaults in custody that she made at a public meeting in Cologne/Germany on 16 March 2002. Following this meeting she became the target of a major smear campaign in the Turkish media. A male journalist publicly threatened her with sexual harassment in a radio program. As a result of women's campaigning, the Turkish Press Council decided on 4 July 2002 to issue a warning to the journalist concerned.

Eren Keskin had been receiving death threats over the telephone for many years. Following appeals from AI members to the Turkish authorities in April 2001, these threats ceased. However, on 15 November 2002, a gunman forced his way into the Istanbul office of the IHD and threatened to shoot the people working there. He was disarmed by a number of IHD members and has since been prosecuted.

Recommended action:

Please send politely worded letters in English or your own language:

- expressing concern at the large number of trials opened against Eren Keskin apparently only for peacefully expressing her views as a human rights defender and for carrying out her role of monitoring and reporting human rights abuses, and asking for all charges against her to be dropped;
- stating that Amnesty International would consider Eren Keskin a prisoner of conscience should she be imprisoned as a result of these trial;
- asking the authorities to allow human rights defenders to pursue unhindered their lawful role of monitoring and reporting on human rights issues in line with the UN Declaration on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders;
- calling on the authorities to take effective action to ensure that the security forces and other public servants are aware that the work of human rights defenders is legitimate.

Whom to write:

Minister of Justice	State Minister with responsibility for Human Rights	President of Turkey:
Prof Dr Aysel Çelikel Ministry of Justice Adalet Bakanlık, 06659 Ankara, Turkey	Mr Ali Doğan, Office of the Prime Minister, Başbakanlık, 06573 Ankara, Turkey	President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, Cumhurbaşkanlığı, 06100 Ankara, Turkey
Fax: + 90 312 417 3954	Fax: + 90 312 417 0476	Fax: +90 312 468 5026
Salutation: Dear Minister	Salutation: Dear Minister	Salutation: Your Excellency

Send copies of your letters to the diplomatic representatives of Turkey accredited to your country.