

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: EUR 44/052/2002 (Public)
News Service No: 183
16 October 2002

Turkey: Sentencing of police officers a positive step in the fight against torture

The sentencing of ten police officers for the torture of the "Manisa children" is a positive step in the fight against impunity for torture in Turkey, Amnesty International said today.

The case of the "Manisa children" -- 16 young people, aged 14 to 26 who were tortured while in detention at police headquarters in Manisa, western Turkey, between December 1995 and January 1996 -- is an extremely high-profile case.

"The sentencing of the torturers to between five and 11 years' imprisonment sends a clear message that torture by security officials in Turkey will not be tolerated," said Amnesty International.

Details of the torture of the "Manisa children" -- detained on suspicion of membership of an illegal, leftist group -- were horrific. The victims reported being stripped naked, sexually assaulted, hung by the arms and subjected to electric shocks while in police detention.

It had appeared during the course of the trial that those responsible might benefit from the impunity that perpetrators of torture in Turkey have overwhelmingly enjoyed in the past - despite medical reports and eyewitness accounts confirming the victims' allegations of torture. For example, the police officers had been acquitted in 1998 and 1999, and the prosecutor had attempted to change the charges from torture to ill-treatment despite the severity of the pain and suffering inflicted.

"The court's decision is a positive step towards ending the pattern of impunity for torturers, but the battle to eradicate torture in Turkey is far from won," Amnesty International said.

The organization continues to receive reports that people have been subjected to torture in police and gendarmerie stations, particularly in south east Turkey.

Amnesty International urged the authorities to take further steps to protect all people in Turkey from the crime of torture -- for example, by completely abolishing incommunicado detention. The organization also called for any allegation that a person has been subjected to torture to be promptly, thoroughly and independently investigated.

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

For latest human rights news view <http://news.amnesty.org>