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TURKEY: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WELCOMES UNITED NATIONS
CONDEMNATION OF "ARBITRARY" JAILING OF PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

Amnesty International welcomes a resolution by the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention which declares the imprisonment of Günay Aslan, Dr Haluk Gerger and Sedat Aslanta_ as arbitrary and requests that the Government of Turkey take the necessary steps to remedy the situation.

The human rights organization considers the three men, imprisoned solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression, to be prisoners of conscience and submitted their cases to the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in July 1994.

In its decision, the Working Group expressed its concern regarding "the imprecise nature of charges such as those provided under Article 8/1 of the Anti-Terror Law, which could be used as a pretext for grave violations of the right to freedom of opinion and expression".

The Working Group noted that the three men had made no incitement to violence and that therefore the application of this article constituted "a violation of their right to freedom of opinion and expression, a right guaranteed under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights".

The three men were arrested under Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law, under which most prisoners of conscience in Turkey are held. It provides for up to five years' imprisonment for "jeopardizing the territorial integrity of the country by disseminating separatist propaganda". Moves to amend Article 8 were opposed by the armed forces and have so far failed to receive parliamentary approval.

Amnesty International calls for the immediate and unconditional release of Dr Haluk Gerger and Sedat Aslanta_ as well as the release of all other prisoners of conscience currently imprisoned. The organization also calls for the immediate repeal or revision of Article 8.

BACKGROUND

Günay Aslan, writer and journalist, was released in January after serving 15 months of a 20-month prison sentence in connection with his book *"33 Bullets"*, about the alleged massacre of Kurdish villages in Turkey more than 50 years ago.

Dr Haluk Gerger, academic, journalist and founding member of the Turkish Human Rights Association (HRA), is serving a 20-month prison sentence for a letter sent to a memorial meeting for three political prisoners who were executed in 1972. He is due to be released in September 1995.

Sedat Aslanta_, lawyer and Deputy Secretary General of the HRA, is serving a three-year prison sentence for a speech he made to the 1992 Annual Congress of the HRA, in which he referred to the problems of Turkey's Kurdish minority. He was arrested in December 1994.
ENDS\