

TURKEY Political prisoners in some 41 Turkish prisons

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Six political prisoners engaged in an indefinite hunger-strike in Turkey have died since 21 July 1996 and more than 250 others, on the 67th day of their protest, are in a critical condition with at least 20 reported to be close to death.

A total of 1,500 political prisoners from various illegal organizations, all accused or convicted of politically motivated offences, many violent, are on hunger-strike in 41 prisons. Those in a critical condition are reported to be suffering from loss of hearing, sight and memory, are vomiting and urinating blood, and have fever, numbness of the limbs and other disorders. The bodies of several prisoners are unable to absorb or retain water.

Some of the prisoners' demands - for example, that ill-treatment and obstruction of medical treatment be stopped - coincide with concerns repeatedly raised with the Turkish authorities by Amnesty International (see below). The organization reiterates its calls for these particular concerns to be dealt with in order to create conditions where the hunger-strikers may call off their protest, thus avoiding further loss of life.

The prisoners who are reported to have died are: Aygün U\_r (25), on 21 July at Ümraniye Prison, Istanbul; Altan Berdan Kerimgiller (26) and Ilginç Özkeskin (35) in Bayrampa\_a Prison, Istanbul, on 22 and 24 July respectively; and Ali Ayata (in Bursa Prison), Hüseyin Demircio\_lu (in Ankara Central Closed Prison) and Müjdat Yanat (in Ayd\_n Prison) on 25 July.

On the day of the first death, 1,000 Kurdish prisoners who had called off their fast after some concessions by the authorities, went back on indefinite hunger-strike, while further prisoners are on alternating five-day hunger-strikes taking water with sugar and salt. On 23 July, 52 of these began the so-called fast-to-death. In a prison in Erzurum two political prisoners, Abdulvahap Karatay and Abdullah Öze, have burned themselves and are now in hospital in grave condition.

On 24 July, representatives of the Justice Ministry, of the prisoners and their families, and lawyers, were negotiating at Bayrampa\_a Prison. At the same time the new Justice Minister, \_evket Kazan, reportedly stated: "*Bayrampa\_a Prison in particular is a nest of terrorists, for training. They are running their organization from there. Up until now we have taken a patient approach. We have done what we can, but failed to convince them. We may resort to tougher measures.*"

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Severe and sometimes fatal beatings of remand and convicted prisoners in Turkish prisons are frequently reported. Most such beatings are inflicted on political prisoners when they are being transported by gendarmes for trial or medical treatment, or alternatively, when gendarmes and police are brought into prisons to quell prisoners' protests. Police and gendarmes take these opportunities to "punish" alleged or convicted members of illegal armed organizations. Hunger-striking prisoners reported that during transfer from Diyarbak\_r to Gaziantep prison they were laid on the ground and cut on the stomach, back,

arms and legs with broken glass. A medical report of 6 June 1996 confirmed marks of beating and cuts from sharp objects.

Prisoners therefore have good grounds for their fear of ill-treatment during transfers. This is apparently an important factor in a demand on which they are placing particular emphasis - that prisoners should not be transferred to prisons outside the provinces where they are being tried. Amnesty International has documented the long history of inhuman treatment during transfers between prisons and transfers to court.

In addition to this, the remand prisoners justifiably complain that transfer to distant prisons will interfere with their right to fair trial. Access to defence lawyers will inevitably be greatly limited by the very long journeys. A lawyer in Istanbul visiting a client in Sinop Prison, for example, would need two days or more for the round trip.

Amnesty International's health professionals' network has recently raised a number of cases of alleged medical neglect of prisoners with the General Director of Prisons and the Ministry of Justice. The organization this month received detailed medical evidence indicating that hospital treatment of 15 prisoners in Ümraniye Prison, Istanbul, is being obstructed.

Amnesty International has repeatedly urged the Turkish authorities to put a swift end to such abuses by ensuring that remand and convicted prisoners will not be brought into contact with police and gendarmes and that the Justice Ministry be given sufficient resources so that there is no need for the prison services to call upon Interior Ministry security forces to handle prison business.

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

- expressing grave concern at the reported loss of life in the continuing hunger-strike by political prisoners in 41 prisons;
- in view of the repeated reports of ill-treatment of prisoners, urging that prisoners will not be brought into contact with police and gendarmes, but will be handled only by staff of the prison services at all times;
- urging that the planned transfer of political prisoners outside provincial borders be reconsidered in view of persistent reports of ill-treatment during journeys outside prison and the prejudicial effects of such transfers on the prisoners' right to a fair trial and proper defence.

**APPEALS TO:**

1. President Süleyman Demirel

Office of the President  
Cumhur Ba\_kanl\_\_\_\_, 06100 Ankara, Turkey

**Faxes: +90.312.4685026**

**Telegrams: President Demirel, Ankara, Turkey**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

2. Prime Minister

Mr Necmettin Erbakan  
Office of the Prime Minister  
Ba\_bakanl\_k, 06573 Ankara, Turkey

**Telegrams: Prime Minister, Ankara, Turkey**

**Telex: 44061/ 44062/ 44063 bbmt tr/ 42099 basb tr**

**Faxes: +90 312 417 0476**

**Salutation: Dear Prime Minister**

3. Minister of Justice:

Mr Evket Kazan

Adalet Bakanl\_\_\_

06659 Ankara, Turkey

**Telegrams: Justice Minister, Ankara, Turkey**

**Faxes: +90 312 417 3954**

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO:**

Minister of Foreign Affairs:

Mrs. Tansu Çiller

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

D\_i\_leri Bakanl\_\_\_, 06100 Ankara

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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 25 August 1996.