

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of Torture

9 October 1990

TURKEY: Nimet Sozen, deputy chairman of Petrol-Is in Batman
Kasim Asutay, worker, member of Petrol-Is in Batman

Sadik Matyar)
Ahmet Tural)
Seyfettin Balcik)
Recep Mentas) from Silvan
Adnan Karayer)
Siran Eminoglu)
Nuran Tanis (f))
Mehmet Uslu, member of Silvan Town Council)

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Large scale arrests have been carried out in various towns around Diyarbakir such as Bismil, Cinar, Batman and Silvan since operations by the security forces began there in the second half of September. No specific information is available as to the reason for the arrests. However, the situation in the region bordering Iraq is reported to be extremely tense and in many cases people detained have been suspected of aiding the Kurdish guerrillas fighting in the area.

On 7 October 1990 Nimet Sozen, the deputy chairman of the Petrol-Is trade union in Batman, and Kasim Asutay, a worker and member of Petrol-Is, were detained in the street in Batman and taken to Diyarbakir. They are believed to be held at the Rapid Force Headquarters and it is feared that they are being tortured during interrogation. A lawyer who tried to see them was refused access.

In an operation by the security forces in the town of Silvan which started on 2 October the eight people named above were detained and taken to Diyarbakir where they are thought to be held at the Rapid Force Headquarters. It is feared that they may be tortured while in detention.

Some 60 people in the town of Cinar are reported detained, but their names and whereabouts are not known so far.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Turkey has a Kurdish ethnic minority which is not officially recognized by the authorities, but is estimated to number some 10 million people. The Kurdish population lives mainly in southeastern Turkey. Frequent allegations of torture and ill-treatment have been received from the region and the number of torture allegations increased substantially after the 1980 military coup. Since August 1984, when Kurdish guerrillas - members of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) - started armed attacks, an alarming number of reports of ill-treatment of detainees by the security forces have come from the eastern and southeastern provinces,

where more than 2000 lives so far have been lost in the continuing fighting.

Turkey ratified the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture on 25 February 1988 and the UN Convention Against Torture on 2 August 1988. However, all information available to Amnesty International indicates that torture is still widespread and systematic in Turkey. Allegations of torture have continued since the transfer of power to a civilian government in 1983. Most allegations relate to ill-treatment of detainees in police custody during their initial interrogation when they are usually denied access to relatives or a lawyer. Under current legislation the maximum detention period before being formally charged or released is 24 hours; in cases involving three or more suspects or due to the 'nature of the crime' it may be extended to 15 days. This period may be extended to 30 days in areas under emergency legislation or martial law. Emergency legislation is currently in force in ten provinces, including Batman and Diyarbakir.

In May 1990 the Turkish government issued decrees 424 and 425, further extending the already extraordinary powers of the Emergency Legislation Governor, and subsequently, in August 1990, the government derogated from Articles 5, 6, 8, 10, 11 and 13 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- urging that the detainees named above and all other detainees held at the Rapid Force Headquarters in Diyarbakir are granted prompt access to their families and lawyers and that they are not ill-treated while in detention;

- requesting to be informed of any charges against those named.

APPEALS TO:

Hayri Kozakcioglu
 Olaganustu Hal Valisi (Emergency Legislation Governor)
 Diyarbakir, Turkey

Telegrams: Diyarbakir Valisi, Diyarbakir, Turkey
 Faxes: 90 831 26471

Prime Minister Yildirim Akbulut
 Office of the Prime Minister
 Basbakanlik
 Ankara, Turkey

Telegrams: Prime Minister, Ankara, Turkey
 Telexes: 44061/44062/44063 bbmt tr
 42099 basb tr
 42875 bbk tr
 Faxes: 90 41 17 04 76 PRIME MINISTER

COPIES TO:

The Editor
Cumhuriyet
 Turkocagi Cad. 39,
 Cagaloglu-Istanbul, Turkey

and diplomatic representatives of Turkey in your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 9 November 1990.