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TURKEY: CHILDREN AT RISK OF TORTURE, DEATH IN CUSTODY AND
"DISAPPEARANCE"

Children are increasingly becoming the victims of torture in Turkey as a consequence of the government's failure to enforce safeguards and act on long overdue reforms, Amnesty International said today as it launched a report on children as victims of human rights violations in the past four years.

Children as young as 12, in some cases detained on suspicion of very minor offences, have been subjected to appalling cruelty in police custody - including beatings, electric shocks and hosing with cold water. Young girls and boys are held alone, blindfolded, and often naked - almost invariably in the hands of unidentified male police officers.

Allegations of sexual torture of juveniles are frequent and in some cases they are corroborated by medical and other evidence, though detention for days or weeks without access to doctor, family or lawyer ensures that such evidence is extremely difficult to obtain.

"This catalogue of violations exposes the hypocrisy of a government that just last year pledged to protect children's rights when it ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child yet has done virtually nothing to stop the harrowing abuse of its most vulnerable citizens," Amnesty International said.

The 31-page report also documents cases of children who have died or "disappeared" in police custody, and shows how, in the context of the 12-year-old conflict between the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) and state forces in southeast Turkey, children have become the victims of abuses by both sides. Children have not only been killed in bombardments of rural settlements by soldiers and aircraft, but have also been killed in village massacres by PKK.

When rebutting allegations of torture, the Turkish authorities repeatedly state that police officers found responsible are tried and punished, yet a sentence recently passed on officers for ill-treating a young boy reveals the true attitude towards such abuses. Last year, 12-year-old Halil Ibrahim Okkali was kicked and beaten with a truncheon during his interrogation in a police station in Izmir. He ended up in intensive care, with his arm in plaster. Medical evidence corroborated his allegations, and two police officers were put on trial. On 30 October this year they were fined the equivalent of US\$8 each after being found guilty of ill-treatment.

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For further information: *Children at risk of torture, death in custody and "disappearance"*
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