
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 125/94

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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - TURKEY

PLEASE NOTE: TRANSLATORS AND PRESS OFFICERS - CORRECTION to text of annual report news release sent out in News Service 123/94. Line 20 should read:

... more than 112 governments tortured or ill-treated prisoners...

Also Line 24 should read: ...the process of drawing up a declaration to protect human rights defenders.

NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

USA - 14 June - SEE NEWS SERVICE 114/94

Turkey - 22 June - SEE NEWS SERVICES 118/94 AND 104/94

Pakistan - 27 July - PLEASE NOTE NEW DATE. SEE NEWS SERVICE 81/94

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

****Denmark - 21 June**** - PLEASE NOTE ANOTHER CHANGE OF EMBARGO DATE. Apologies for the numerous changes to the embargo date. This is the final date. SEE NEWS SERVICES 118/94 AND 105/94

Mozambique - 23 June - SEE ENCLOSED ITEM, SEE NEWS SERVICE 115/94

Myanmar - 20 July - SEE NEWS SERVICE 99/94

FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES

Annual Report - 0600 hrs GMT 7 July 1994 - SEE NEWS SERVICE 51/94

News Service 125/94

AI INDEX: EUR 44/WU 13/94

EMBARGOED FOR 0001 HRS GMT, WEDNESDAY 22 JUNE 1994

TURKISH GOVERNMENT INTENSIFIES ATTACK ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The Turkish Government's attack on freedom of expression has intensified with a dramatic escalation of serious human rights violations, Amnesty International said today as it called for an expert mission to be sent to investigate deteriorating human rights in Turkey.

"The situation gets graver by the hour," the human rights organization said. "Every week more people are thrown behind bars accused of pro-Kurdish 'separatist propaganda'; death-squad-style killings are reported almost daily; and there has been an alarming increase in 'disappearances'."

"Unless decisive action is taken now, the practice of 'disappearance', like that of extrajudicial executions and torture, will become established in Turkey as a routine tool of intimidation and elimination."

Amnesty International is calling on the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) urgently to send an expert mission to Turkey to investigate the crackdown on freedom of expression and systematic practice of torture and recommend changes to improve the situation.

As part of the crackdown, at least 24 people have "disappeared" without trace this year in circumstances suggesting security force involvement. Many more have been abducted and their bodies found later. Increasingly the victims are villagers in south east Turkey, helplessly caught up in the conflict between government forces and guerrillas of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK).

Persistent security force harassment of villagers, including airforce bombings, has resulted in deaths and at least 871 villages being deserted. More than 8,000 villagers are reportedly now refugees after fleeing over the border to Northern Iraq since March.

As the conflict escalates in the southeast, the repression of freedom of expression is spreading to cities all over the country. Lawyers, human rights workers, journalists, trade unionists and political activists are all targets.

Two weeks ago, on 3 June, three Kurdish business men -- all active supporters of DEP, a legal parliamentary party perceived as the party of the Kurds -- were abducted from an Istanbul hotel apparently by plainclothes police. Three days later, their bodies were found with gunshot wounds to the back of the head. Their deaths bring the total of DEP members killed since 1992 to more than 70.

Not even prominent DEP politicians are safe. One DEP parliamentarian was shot dead in broad daylight after his police escort was mysteriously lifted. Another DEP parliamentarian, Leyla Zana, is one of six Kurdish deputies who had their parliamentary immunity lifted in March 1994 and now await trial on charges of separatism carrying the death sentence.

Her husband, Mehdi Zana, former mayor of Diyarbakir, was arrested on 13 May and sentenced to four years' imprisonment for testifying on human rights in Turkey to the Human Rights Sub-Commission of the European Parliament in December 1992.

In a report published today entitled "*Turkey: Dissident voices jailed again*", Amnesty International details a rapid increase since 1993 in the number of people imprisoned under the Anti-Terror Law for expressing their non-violent opinions.

The report also condemns human rights abuses by the Kurdish Workers' Party, (PKK), including the killing of journalists, local politicians and civilians and appeals for the release of a prisoners held by the PKK.

"We recognize that the Turkish Government is combatting armed opposition by guerrillas of the PKK, but it must not use conflict in the southeast to justify security force violations against its own citizens," Amnesty International said.

Incidents of torture and death under torture are also on the increase throughout the country and both the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and United Nations Committee against Torture have published reports confirming that torture is widespread. Yet the Turkish Government has ignored all recommendations for improvement and allows its security forces to act with impunity.

The CSCE -- an inter-governmental organization encompassing 53 states in greater Europe -- has said that fighting torture and attacks on freedom of expression are high priorities.

Amnesty International is calling for them to step in where others have left off. The CSCE has the flexibility and mechanisms to investigate quickly and work with governments in a cooperative way when the human rights commitments they have voluntarily made are in jeopardy.

"The CSCE has made dramatic reforms to its human rights mechanisms to make the organization relevant to the new Europe. Whether it can tackle violations in Turkey will be the acid test," Amnesty International said.

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