

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## **Joint press statement by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), the Human Rights Association (IHD), the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TIHV) and Mazlum Der**

A joint delegation from Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), joined local partners the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, the Human Rights Association and Mazlum Der to meet Turkish government representatives in Ankara this week. During the days they were together they witnessed historic events in Turkey's progress toward respect for human rights. These were the introduction of public broadcasting in minority languages and the dramatic, though provisional, release of the four former DEP parliamentarians, Leyla Zana, Hatip Dicle, Orhan Dogan and Selim Sadak, after ten years of imprisonment. Between 8 and 10 June the six organizations met senior government ministers and officials and others centrally involved in the ongoing reform process in Turkey.

The non-governmental organizations (NGOs) welcome many of the legal reforms which have been introduced in the recent past. However, concerns continue about shortcomings in current legislation and the implementation of the reforms. The NGOs urged the Turkish authorities to take urgent practical measures to ensure the full protection of human rights. Concerns were expressed about continuing allegations of torture and ill-treatment; violations of the freedoms of expression, assembly, association and religion, and the right to fair trial. The delegation also raised concerns about prisons, national minorities, the lack of independent investigations into human rights violations, including the lack of independent forensic institutes, and internal displacement from the southeastern and eastern provinces.

The serious and constructive dialogue that took place showed that the Turkish authorities are increasingly open to consultation with human rights organizations. During the meetings the NGOs urged the government to end judicial harassment of human rights defenders, to promote public awareness of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, and to consult civil society more systematically over future reforms.

During the various meetings, the government informed the delegation of its serious intention to address human rights violations and the authorities supplied information about measures planned and undertaken by various ministries.

This meeting took place in a strikingly positive atmosphere. The six human rights organizations will continue to closely monitor further developments.

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