

TURKEYR_dvan K_zg_n (m), human rights defender
Feyzi Akbulut (m), human rights defender

R_dvan K_zg_n and Feyzi Akbulut have been remanded to prison in Bingöl, southeast Turkey, to await trial. Amnesty International is concerned that they may be prisoners of conscience detained for their activities as human rights defenders.

R_dvan K_zg_n and Feyzi Akbulut - chairman and secretary of the Bingöl branch of the Human Rights Association (IHD) were reportedly detained on 25 January, following their attendance as observers at a press conference. The press conference had been convened by the legal pro-Kurdish political party People's Democracy Party (HADEP) in commemoration of the first anniversary of the "disappearances" of Serdar Tan__ and Ebubekir Deniz (See UA 26/01, AI Index: EUR 44/007/2001 and updates). Sixty six HADEP party members were also reportedly taken into detention at the same time and all but six were subsequently released.

On 26 January, R_dvan K_zg_n and Feyzi Akbulut were remanded to prison having been charged with being in violation of the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations. On 20 February, a preliminary hearing at a court of first instance ruled that R_dvan K_zg_n and Feyzi Akbulut should remain in prison until their trial.

The IHD has played an important role in monitoring human rights violations and making them known to the public in Turkey. Amnesty International is concerned that the continuing pressure on the _HD, including the arrest of R_dvan K_zg_n and Feyzi Akbulut, may prevent it from continuing to do so, which could lead to an increase in human rights violations. It could also allow the perpetrators of human rights violations to act with impunity in the belief that their crimes will not be monitored, investigated or punished.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The IHD Bingöl branch and R_dvan K_zg_n have been placed under great pressure in recent months. On the morning of 30 November 2001, police raided the IHD Bingöl branch offices and confiscated documents including application forms completed by victims of alleged human rights violations in the province. R_dvan K_zg_n was reportedly threatened and insulted by the police. He was suspended from chairmanship of IHD Bingöl branch by a decision of the Governor of Bingöl, under Article 45 of the Law on Associations Law, because he had apparently denied access to police officers who wanted to follow and video-tape a training program in the _HD branch on the occasion of the International Day against Violence against Women on 25 November 2001. This decision was revised in early January 2002, but R_dvan K_zg_n will have to stand trial under these charges.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- urging the authorities to guarantee the safety of prisoners of conscience R_dvan K_zg_n and Feyzi Akbulut, calling for their immediate and unconditional release and to drop all charges against them;
- requesting that the authorities take steps to extend durable protection in law to the IHD and its staff and to allow human rights defenders to pursue unhindered their lawful role of monitoring and reporting human rights matters in line with the UN Declaration on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders;
- calling on the authorities to take effective action to ensure all public servants recognize the legitimacy of the work of human rights defenders.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Justice
Prof Hikmet Sami Türk
Ministry of Justice
Adalet Bakanl____
06659 Ankara, Turkey

Telegrams: Justice Minister, Ankara, Turkey

Faxes: + 90 312 417 3954 / 418 5667

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

State Minister with responsibility for Human Rights
Nejat Arseven
Office of the Prime Minister,
Ba_bakanl_k,
06573 Ankara, Turkey

Fax: + 90 312 417 04 76

Salutation: Dear Minister

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 3 April 2002.