

**PUBLIC**

**AI Index: EUR 44/69/00**

**UA 378/00**

**Fear of torture**

**13 December 2000**

**TURKEY**

**Relatives and supporters of hunger striking prisoners**

**Ümit Erkol, Ankara Medical Association Chairperson  
65 other detainees**

---

Police have severely beaten dozens of people at a demonstration in the capital, Ankara, in support of political prisoners on hunger strike. Similar demonstrations are planned throughout Turkey in the next few days, and Amnesty International is concerned that many more people are at risk of beatings or torture in custody.

Police reportedly arrested 66 people at the 12 December demonstration. According to eyewitnesses, around 15 were severely beaten at the time of arrest and when they were taken away in a police van. All those arrested are due to be brought before a prosecutor today.

Political prisoners across Turkey are on hunger strike in protest at government plans to move them to new prisons, where they will be housed in small cells rather than dormitories that hold up to 60 prisoners. They are afraid that they will be isolated and at greater risk of assault or torture if they are locked up alone or in small groups.

Relatives of the hunger strikers have been mounting daily demonstrations in support. On 12 December around 500 demonstrators, among them members of the Human Rights Association (IHD) and other NGOs, had gathered on Sakarya Street at 12.30 when they were attacked by police. Two journalists and a cameraman who were covering the demonstration were injured. Afterwards a group of demonstrators threw stones at police officers who in turn fired watercannon and used tear gas.

Some relatives of prisoners took shelter in the nearby offices of two opposition parties, the Freedom and Solidarity Party (ÖDP) and Socialist Power Party of Turkey (TSIP), and reportedly barricaded themselves in. Other relatives were already in the ÖDP office, where they had started their own hunger strike.

Police in armoured vehicles surrounded the buildings and were joined by ultra-nationalist Nationalist Action Party (MHP) supporters, who threw stones to break the windows of the ÖDP and TSIP offices, which are on the fourth and fifth floors. Police broke in at around 3pm, apparently using teargas, severely beating and arresting everybody inside. Among those arrested was Ankara Medical Association Chairperson Ümit Erkol, who works for the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey. He was released after three hours, but had been severely beaten by police in the ÖDP building and in a police van.

People who came to support the demonstrators while they were barricaded inside the building were beaten by the police and the ultra-nationalist activists, and demonstrators and the ultra-nationalists fought with stones and clubs. Some of the demonstrators were arrested. Doctors from the Forensic institute examined 58 of the 66 detainees, and 20 had to be hospitalised. None of the MHP members were arrested.

The Human Rights Association (IHD) Ankara Branch was closed on 12 December, reportedly after they received telephone threats because of their support for the hunger strikers.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Several hundred political prisoners went on hunger strike on 20 October in protest at the planned changes to the prison system. Over 200 prisoners are now on "death fast" (taking liquid but no sugar): 26 are now gravely ill and their lives are in serious danger.

There have been demonstrations against the new prison system for months, where police have repeatedly used excessive force. At a demonstration in August one woman reportedly had her nose broken, while another suffered serious head injuries and a third was sexually abused in a police car. Tensions have increased since two police officers were shot dead and 12 wounded by the outlawed leftist party TKP/ML-TIKKO in Istanbul on 11 December.

Amnesty International has written to the Justice Minister expressing concern about a possible regime of isolation in the new prisons which might amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and which would facilitate torture and ill-treatment. Amnesty International has urged the authorities to allow prisoners to associate with each other each day.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in Turkish, German, English or your own language:**

- asking what charges the 66 people detained are facing;
- expressing deep concern about allegations that police used excessive force and ill-treated Ümit Erkol and other detainees;
- urging the government to carry out a full and impartial investigation, including an independent medical examination, to establish the truth of these allegations, and asking to be informed of the results;
- urging the authorities to bring those responsible to justice, to suspend any officers accused of torture and ill-treatment from duty while they are under investigation, and dismiss them if they are convicted;
- urging the authorities to ensure that police do not use excessive force, torture or ill-treatment against demonstrators;
- expressing concern about the threats against the IHD;
- reminding the government of its obligations under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, to which Turkey is a state party: "No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment".

Minister of Interior

Mr Saadettin Tantan  
\_çi\_leri Bakanl\_\_  
06644 Ankara, Turkey

**Telegrams: Interior Minister, Ankara, Turkey**

**Faxes: + 90 312 418 17 95**

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

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**

Ankar Chief of Police

Ankara Emniyet Müdürü  
Ankara Emniyet Müdürlü\_ü  
Ankara, Turkey

**Telegrams: Ankara Emniyet Müdürü, Ankara, Turkey**

**Salutation: Dear Chief of Police**

**COPIES TO:**

State Minister with responsibility for Human Rights

Mr Rü\_tü Kaz\_m Yücelen  
Office of the Prime Minister  
Ba\_bakanl\_k

06573 Ankara  
Turkey  
**Faxes: + 90 312 417 0476**

and to diplomatic representatives of Turkey accredited to your country.

**Please could appeal writers in EU member countries also send copies to their Minister of Foreign Affairs.**

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 24 January 2001.