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Turkey: Amnesty International welcomes government's decision to invite UN Working Group on Disappearances and the Special Rapporteur on torture

Amnesty International welcomes the Turkish Government's decision to invite the United Nations (UN) Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture to visit the country in 1997 and 1998, but urged the government to cooperate fully with them and to implement their recommendations.

Invitations to the UN's "thematic mechanisms" were among the recommendations proposed by Amnesty International during its campaign against human rights violations in Turkey which was launched in October 1996.

"The visits by UN experts will give an opportunity to uncover the factors which have contributed to the persistence of torture and the proliferation of 'disappearances' in Turkey, and make concrete recommendations to end them," Amnesty International said today.

The human rights organization stressed that if these missions are to be effective, the delegations must be given unaccompanied access to all areas of the country, all places of detention, all relevant officials, and all relevant records of military and police operations. Any restrictions on such access would seriously undermine the effectiveness of the visits and call into question the government's willingness to cooperate with the UN.

"For relatives of the 'disappeared' the visit of the UN Working Group offers the promise of some answers to the fate of their loved ones. It is therefore important that this visit is sufficient in duration to follow up at least some of the outstanding individual cases," Amnesty International said.

"The visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on torture would address a practice which has been carried out under successive governments in Turkey for decades."

It is also essential that recommendations by the expert bodies are fully implemented. The record of Turkish governments in this regard is not satisfactory. For example, though detention periods were shortened in March this year, the recommendation made by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and the UN Committee against Torture that incommunicado detention be abolished has yet to be carried out.

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