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Turkey: 49 protesters jailed following criticism of international inaction in Northern Iraq

Amnesty International is deeply concerned at the formal arrest by Ankara State Security Court of Yildiz Temürtürkan, President of the Turkish Human Rights Association's Ankara branch, and 48 trade unionists, members of political parties and members of the public yesterday.

They were taken into police custody on 7 June while preparing to leave a black wreath at the American Embassy to protest at international inaction over events in Northern Iraq. Yildiz Temürtürkan is now held at Ni_de Prison, 300 kilometres outside Ankara.

In Turkey, people suspected of offences under the Anti-Terror Law can now be held in police custody without access to family, friends or legal counsel for up to four days before being charged and formally arrested, or released. This period may be increased to 10 days in the nine provinces currently under State of Emergency, and to seven days in the rest of Turkey during which detainees would have to be granted access to a lawyer, under recently amended legislation.

“Lawyers acting on behalf of the prisoners were disturbed to hear that their clients, who were taken into custody while assembling peacefully in a municipal park, are charged with supporting an armed gang,” Amnesty International said. “We believe them to be prisoners of conscience, and call on the Turkish authorities for their immediate and unconditional release.”

Unless objections to the formal arrest are upheld in forthcoming days, which only rarely happens, the prisoners will be held at the very least for one or two months, until the first hearing of their trial.

The Diyarbakır and Malatya branches of the Turkish Human Rights Association were closed down on the orders of local governors late last month.

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