

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Abduction / Fear of Extrajudicial Killing

10 January 1994

TURKEY

Melke Tok, Assyrian Christian priest, aged 60

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of the Assyrian Christian priest Melke Tok who was abducted in southeast Turkey on 9 January 1994.

On 9 January, as people were gathering at the Mar Gabriel monastery for the ordination of two young monks, news came that Melke Tok, the priest of the village of Miden (Turkish: Ö\_ündük), had been abducted on the road from Miden to Midyat near the village of Be-sorino (Turkish: Haberli). Reportedly, he was in a minibus with two others after conducting the Sunday service in Idil and was on his way to Be-sorino in order to conduct a wedding there. His vehicle was followed from Idil by a white car without a number plate, which stopped the minibus between Miden and Karalar at around 1pm. Two masked and armed men forced the priest to get into the car and then drove off towards Nusaybin.

The driver of the minibus is said to have been held and interrogated by the gendarmerie (soldiers carrying out police duties in rural areas) in Be-sorino until the evening. The monastery immediately informed the Turkish authorities of the abduction, suspected of having been carried out by village guards or Islamic fundamentalists close to the security forces.

Other Christians have been attacked and abducted in this area (see below), and there had been rumours that Melke Tok, a very respected figure in the community, would be abducted. Others have been threatened, and an abduction attempt against a deacon was foiled.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Twenty years ago some 20,000 Christians lived in the area near the Syrian border known as Tur Abdin. Today no more than 2,000 remain, the others having fled, mostly to western Europe. In January 1993, five Christians and two Yezidis (members of a syncretist faith) were killed and many more injured in two attacks on minibuses. Later, four Christian villagers were detained, and all alleged torture, ill-treatment, theft and destruction of property (see EXTRA 07/93, EUR 44/05/93, 21 January 1993). Fear spread after a young Christian teacher was abducted from a minibus, again allegedly by village guards, as well as some time later a five-year-old boy, who was then found murdered. The teacher was released in September 1993 after seven months in captivity.

In July 1993, Amnesty International published a report, Escalation in human rights abuses against Kurdish villagers (AI Index: EUR 44/64/93), giving detailed accounts of violations allegedly committed by police, gendarmes, members of special teams (heavily-armed units operating under the control of the Interior Ministry and trained for close combat with guerrillas) and village guards, during security raids on Kurdish villages which refuse to participate in the village guard militia. Membership of the village guards, a civil defence

force organized and paid by the government to fight PKK guerrillas, is theoretically voluntary, but villagers, in particular the Assyrian Christians, are effectively caught between two fires. Many are reluctant to serve as village guards for fear of reprisals from the guerrillas. Those who refuse, however, are subject to reprisals by the security forces or village guards from neighbouring villages who accuse them of actively or passively supporting the guerrillas.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in English or in your own language:**

- expressing grave concern for the safety of the priest from Öündük village, Melke Tok, who was abducted on 9 January 1994 on the road to Haberli, province of \_\_rnak, by unidentified people, possibly village guards;
- urging that immediate steps are taken to establish the whereabouts of Melke Tok and to secure his safe release;
- calling for those responsible for his abduction to be brought to justice;
- requesting to be informed of the measures taken and the results obtained.

**APPEALS TO**

1) Chief of Staff of the Gendarmerie:

Orgeneral Ayd\_n\_lter  
Jandarma Kuvvetleri Komutanl\_\_\_\_  
Bakanl\_klar  
Ankara, Turkey

**Telegrams: Jandarma Genel Komutani, Ankara, Turkey**

**Faxes: +90 312 418 0476**

**Salutation: Dear General**

2) Emergency Legislation Governor:

Mr Ünal Erkan  
Ola\_anüstü Hal Valisi  
Diyarbak\_r, Turkey

**Telegrams: Olaganustu Hal Valisi, Diyarbakir, Turkey**

**Telexes: 72110 OHVT TR**

**72084 DYVA TR "please forward to the Governor"**

**72090 JASY TR**

**Faxes: +90 412 222 6174 ? (telephone first) ?**

**Salutation: Dear Governor**

3) Deputy Prime Minister

Mr Murat Karayalç\_n  
Office of the Prime Minister  
Ba\_bakanl\_k  
06573 Ankara, Turkey

**Telegrams: Deputy Prime Minister, Ankara, Turkey**

**Telexes: 44061/44062/44063 bbmt tr; 42099 basb tr; 42875 bbk tr**

**Faxes: +90 312 417 0476 DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER**

**+90 312 230 8896 (attn: Deputy Prime Minister)**

**Salutation: Dear Deputy Prime Minister**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

Minister of Foreign Affairs:  
Mr Hikmet Çetin, Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
D\_i\_leri Bakanl\_\_\_\_  
06100 Ankara, Turkey  
**Faxes: 90 312 287 3869**

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 21 February 1994.