

EXTERNAL

AI Index: EUR 44/45/94
Distrib: PG/SC

Date: 14 July 1994

MEDICAL CONCERN

**Recep Mara_li
TURKEY**

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for Recep Mara_li, a 38-year-old Kurdish publisher and writer, who was detained in Istanbul on 8 July. Recep Mara_li has been indicted under the Anti-Terror Law, a warrant for his arrest having been issued in September 1993 after he participated in a television debate on the Kurdish question. Ten other Kurds were detained on the same day in a police operation in Istanbul and all were taken to the Anti-Terror Branch of Istanbul's Police Headquarters for interrogation where they are reported to have been subjected to torture, including beatings, electric shocks and *falaka* (beating on the soles of the feet). There is particular concern for Recep Mara_li who suffers from neurological problems which first became apparent during an earlier nine years' term of imprisonment.

One of the female detainees - Nuran Çamli, who is Recep Mara_li's wife and who suffers from kidney stones - was beaten around the kidney area. On 10 July another of the female detainees - Nurcan Balci - was transferred to hospital with fractures to her left knee cap and lower spine. Recep Mara_li and some of the other detainees are then reported to have begun a hunger strike. Police were given permission by the prosecutor to hold the detainees for interrogation until 21 July. In Turkey, detainees held on suspicion of political offences to be tried in State Security Courts may be held without charge for 15 days before being brought before a judge to be charged or released (this may be extended to 30 days in the provinces under emergency legislation or martial law).

Background

Recep Mara_li was first imprisoned at the age of 16 in connection with articles he published in newspapers in his home town of Erzurum. Upon release he began to work for a publishing house in Istanbul which published works mainly on Kurdish issues and the history and situation of the Kurdish minority in Turkey. In 1976 he became director of this publishing company which was the frequent target of police raids, and in 1982 he was again imprisoned.

Numerous court cases were brought against him, the majority in connection with his publishing activities, and, when granted conditional release nine years later, his prison sentences totalled over 36 years. He was conditionally released in April 1991 at the time of a partial amnesty which provided for the commutation of death sentences and the conditional release of certain categories of prisoners who had served part of their sentence.

Recep Mara_li is reported to suffer from neurological problems resulting from cerebellar atrophy and he experiences difficulties with his vision and with balance. These symptoms first began in 1984 after a prolonged hunger strike in Diyarbakir Military Prison where he was then

held. The hunger strike, which began in January 1984 and continued until early March, led to the death of two prisoners and several others were transferred to prison hospital in a critical state when the hunger strike ended. Recep Mara_li was among this group and at the time was said to have been admitted to hospital in a comatose state. The prisoners were ill-treated and beaten during the hunger strike and Recep Mara_li is reported to have received a severe blow to the head. Although his present neurological problems can be dated back to this period, conditions in Diyarbakir Military Prison were extremely harsh and it was not until several years after the onset of his symptoms that Recep Mara_li was sent for neurological examination despite repeated recommendations to that effect.

Following his release in 1991, he continued to write, to publish books and to speak about a possible settlement of the Kurdish question. Various charges against him continued to be heard in the courts and he was convicted of separatist propaganda in at least one trial.

In September 1993 an arrest warrant was issued against Recep Mara_li after he had pleaded in a televised discussion in July 1993 for a peaceful political solution to the Kurdish question. Amnesty International regards Recep Mara_li as a prisoner of conscience arrested solely for the peaceful expression of opinion and is calling for the charges against him to be dropped.

Over the last year the Turkish Government has made clear its intent to step up operations against Kurdish guerrillas fighting for autonomy in the southeast. In mid-1993 the Government declared in a press briefing that it would wage an "all-out war" on Kurdish separatism. Part of this strategy appears to be an attack on freedom of expression and the second half of 1993 and first months of 1994 saw a dramatic increase in the detention and prosecution of lawyers, human rights activists, political activists, writers, publishers, journalists and others.

Given the number of cases which have been brought against Recep Mara_li over the years and the fact that his earlier sentences were only suspended when he was granted conditional release, there are fears that he could face very lengthy imprisonment if again convicted.

Amnesty International is urging that the charges which now stand against him be dropped and that he be released from custody. The organization is particularly concerned, given his state of health, that he should be provided with immediate access to medical attention and is seeking guarantees that he will have continuing access to medical attention while he remains in custody. Representations have been made to the Turkish Government by Amnesty International about the ill-treatment and torture that he and others interrogated with him have faced.

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To: Medical professionals
From: Medical Office / Research Department - Europe
Date: 14 July 1994

MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION

**Recep Mara_li
TURKEY**

Keywords

Theme: POC/ill-health

Profession/association: Publisher/writer

Summary

Recep Mara_li is a 38-year-old prisoner of conscience who was detained on 8 July and is being held for interrogation with others detained on the same day. He is a Kurdish writer and publisher who has previously been imprisoned for over nine years during which time he participated in prolonged hunger strikes and was severely tortured. He is now facing charges of separatist propaganda. Recep Mara_li is reported to have visual loss and to be suffering from cerebellar atrophy which causes problems with his balance. While in police custody in Istanbul, the detainees are reported to have been tortured and a hunger strike was begun by Recep Mara_li and others in protest at their ill-treatment. Please see the details attached.

Recommended Actions

Letters are requested from medical professionals to the addresses below:

- noting that Recep Mara_li suffers from neurological problems and urging that he be given immediate access to a doctor
- expressing concern that extended interrogation in police detention without any safeguards should have been permitted when he had known medical problems, and seeking firm assurances that he will have ready access to medical attention as long as he remains in custody
- expressing concern at reports that Recep Mara_li and others held with him for investigation at Istanbul Police Headquarters have been subjected to torture and that one of the detainees was hospitalized after sustaining serious fractures
- expressing concern at the charges which have been brought against Recep Mara_li after he appeared in a televised debate on the question of Turkish Kurds

- noting that he has not been a proponent of violence and urging that the charges brought against him under the Anti-Terror Law be dropped and that he be released from custody

Addresses

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2) Prime Minister:

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Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

3) Minister of Health and Social Welfare

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