

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 266/93 Fear of "Disappearance"

10 August 1993

TURKEY: Aysel Malkaç (female), journalist with Özgür Gündem in Istanbul

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of journalist Aysel Malkaç who went missing in Istanbul on 7 August 1993 and is feared to have been abducted by government agents.

Aysel Malkaç, who was born 1971 in Tunceli, has been working at the main office of the Kurdish-owned newspaper Özgür Gündem since May 1993. She is a reporter for news from Istanbul. On the morning of 7 August, she left the editorial office on business at 10am and has not been seen or heard of since. For about a week the newspaper's office and staff have been under heavy surveillance by the police who reportedly are patrolling the streets in the neighbourhood and monitoring telephone calls. It is probable that Aysel Malkaç was followed by a police officer. However, no witnesses and no information as to the whereabouts of Aysel Malkaç have been forthcoming so far.

There is grave fear for her safety since another Özgür Gündem journalist, Ferhat Tepe, has just been found dead in Elaz__ following his abduction by an unidentified man in Bitlis on 28 July 1993. Circumstantial evidence in his case appears to indicate that government forces were involved in his abduction and murder.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

At least eight of Özgür Gündem's journalists, distributors and vendors have been killed in unclarified circumstances since it started publication in May 1992. Özgür Gündem has been the only newspaper in Turkey which consistently reported human rights violations from the predominantly Kurdish provinces where a State of Emergency is in force and the security forces are pursuing a policy of "total conflict" against guerrillas of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK). According to Turkish press reports, this military campaign is to be accompanied by a major propaganda drive and the owners and directors of all Turkish newspapers except Özgür Gündem and the leftist Ayd nl k were called on 11 July 1993 to the office of the Chief of the Turkish General Staff for a press briefing and subsequent dinner with the Prime Minister. Following the arrest of the chief editor of Özgür Gündem on 14 July, the State Security Court in Istanbul is now seeking to close permanently the paper on the charge of separatist propaganda and praising the PKK. More than 80 issues of the paper have been confiscated in the past.

Turkey has a Kurdish ethnic minority which is estimated to number some 10 million people, living mainly in southeastern Turkey. Since August 1984, when guerrillas of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) started armed attacks against the security forces, more than 6,000 lives have been lost on both sides and among the civilian population in the context of their fight for an independent Kurdish state. In mid-March 1993

the PKK declared a unilateral ceasefire and its intention to end the fighting and to enter the democratic process as a political party. Operations by the security forces against the PKK continued. The ceasefire was broken when on 24 May guerrillas of the PKK ambushed a convoy of soldiers, reportedly travelling unarmed and in civilian clothes. They killed 33 soldiers and two civilians. The security forces responded with large-scale military operations covering the entire region. A state of emergency continues to be in force in 10 provinces in the region and the Emergency Legislation Governor in Diyarbakir has extraordinary powers over three additional provinces.

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

- expressing your concern that yet another journalist from Özgür Gündem is missing: Aysel Malkaç from Istanbul who has not been seen since 7 August 1993;
- urging that everything possible is undertaken without delay to establish her whereabouts and to secure her safety and release.

APPEALS TO

1) Prime Minister:

Mrs Tansu Çiller

Ba_bakanl_k

06573 Ankara, Turkey

Telegrams: Prime Minister, Ankara, Turkey

Telexes: 44061/44062/44063 bbmt tr

42099 basb tr, 42875 bbk tr

Faxes: + 90 4 417 04 76

+ 90 4 230 88 96

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

2) Minister of the Interior:

Mr Mehmet Gazio_lu

_çi_leri Bakanl____

06644 Ankara, Turkey

Telegrams: Interior Minister, Ankara, Turkey

Faxes: + 90 4 418 1795

Salutation: Dear Minister

3) Istanbul Chief of Police:

Mr Necdet Menzir

Istanbul Emniyet Müdürü

_stanbul, Turkey

Telegrams: Emniyet Muduru, Istanbul, Turkey

Telexes: 30811 IEHM TR, 30812 EMMH TR, 26177 IEMT TR

Salutation: Dear Sir

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs:

Mr Hikmet Çetin

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

D__i_leri Bakanl____

06100 Ankara, Turkey

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 September 1993.