

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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EXTRA 87/93 Legal Concern/Prisoner of Conscience

8 October 1993

NORTHERN CYPRUS Salih Askero_ul

Amnesty International is appealing for the immediate and unconditional release of Salih Askero_ul, a Cypriot from the Turkish zone, who was taken into custody on 27 September 1993 for refusing to do his military service on grounds of conscientious objection. He is currently held in Lefko_a Prison and will be brought before the Security Forces Military Court in Lefko_a on 15 October where he will face charges of failure to respond to call-up (Article 39 of the Military Penal Code - maximum sentence of three years) and making disparaging speeches about the institution of military service (Article 29 - maximum sentence of three years).

Amnesty International is asking its members to appeal to the authorities in northern Cyprus, believing that a determined response from the international community on this case may well help to secure Salih Askero_ul's release.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This is the first case of its kind in northern Cyprus and the more distressing due to the personal circumstances of Salih Askero_ul's story. In 1989 he left the northern Cyprus to avoid being called up for military service and was accepted as a refugee by the Cypriot authorities in the south shortly after his arrival there in 1990. During his time in the Republic of Cyprus his relationship with a Greek Cypriot partner brought him under intense pressure from the police, and then his partner's father who, learning that she was pregnant, reportedly threatened to kill them both. After severe harassment by family and police the couple fled to northern Cyprus on 28 February 1993. Salih Askero_ul was called to appear for military service on 24 September. Instead he gave a press conference, explaining the reasons for his refusal to serve in the armed forces, but stating his willingness to serve an equivalent term in alternative civilian service.

On 27 September Salih Askero_ul turned himself over to the authorities and was arrested together with the poet, Ne_e Ya_im, who had helped the couple. Ne_e Ya_im was released the following day, but Salih Askero_ul's partner Yiota Nikolaoy and their newly born daughter, Melissa, were expelled back to the southern side.

Amnesty International views objection to military service on conscientious grounds as a legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This position was adopted by the UN Commission on Human Rights in Resolution 1987/46 and reaffirmed in Resolution 1993/84 which appealed to states: "if they have not already done so, to enact legislation and to take measures aimed at exemption from military service on the basis of a genuinely held conscientious objection to armed service" and reminded states of its recommendation that they introduce forms of alternative service compatible with the reasons for conscientious objection, and that they "refrain from subjecting conscientious objectors to imprisonment".

The Republic of Cyprus was partitioned in 1974 following a failed coup attempt by the military junta in Greece and subsequent invasion by armed forces from the Republic of Turkey. The mainly Greek population of the south of the island

and the mainly Turkish population of the north are separated by a "Green Line" monitored by a UN peacekeeping force. The administration of the northern sector declared the establishment of a Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in 1983 but this has only been recognized by Turkey.

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

- expressing regret that the administration of northern Cyprus should have responded to its first conscientious objector with imprisonment;
- appealing for the immediate release of Salih Askeroglu;
- urging the authorities in northern Cyprus to establish a civilian alternative to military service.

APPEALS TO

1) Mr Rauf Denktaş
Leader of the Turkish Cypriot Community
Cumhurbaşkanı
Lefkoşa - KIBRIS
via Mersin 10, Turkey

Telegrams: Mr Rauf Denktaş, Lefkoşa - KIBRIS, via Mersin10, Turkey

Faxes: +90 520 72252

Salutation: Dear Mr Denktaş

2) Mr Kenan Atakol
Ministry for Defence and Foreign Affairs
Lefkoşa - KIBRIS
via Mersin 10, Turkey

Telegrams: Mr Kenan Atakol, Lefkoşa - KIBRIS via Mersin 10, Turkey

Faxes: +90 520 83241

Salutation: Dear Minister

3) Tuğgeneral Yaşar Spor
KT Güvenlik Kuvvetleri Komutanı
Lefkoşa - KIBRIS
via Mersin 10, Turkey

Telegrams: Tuğgeneral Yaşar Spor, Lefkoşa - KIBRIS via Mersin 10, Turkey

Salutation: Dear Sir

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Yenidüzen (New Order)
Yeni Sanayi Bölgesi
Lefkoşa - KIBRIS
via Mersin 10, Turkey
Faxes: +90 520 75240

Kıbrıs (Cyprus)
Dr Fazıl Küçük Bulvarı
Lefkoşa - KIBRIS
via Mersin 10, Turkey
Faxes: +90 520 81934

Chief of the Turkish General Staff
General Do_an Güre_
Bakanl_klar
Ankara, Turkey
Faxes: +90 4 418 1795

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 15 October 1993.