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£TURKEY: @Death and Torture of Shepherds in __rnak Province

Turkey has a Kurdish ethnic minority which is estimated to number some 10 million people who live mainly in the southeast of the country. Any activity for a separate Kurdish political or cultural identity is punishable under Turkish law. Kurdish guerrillas - members of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) - have been fighting in the region since 1984 for an independent Kurdish state. According to reports received by Amnesty International, the following incident occurred in __rnak province, which is one of 10 provinces in the southeast under a State of Emergency.

On 20 July 1991 three non-commissioned officers and a number of soldiers attached to the gendarmerie post at Görendoruk (Kurdish: Memiran) detained four shepherds: Osman Ekinçi, Hasan Ekinçi, Agit Çeker and Ramazan Geçgel, in the countryside outside Görendoruk and beat them with fists and riflebutts. The soldiers accused the four men of assisting guerrillas of the PKK. It is alleged that the shepherds were held and periodically beaten from 5.00 in the morning until about 6.00 in the evening.

As a result of this ill-treatment, Osman Ekinçi, aged 27 and married with six children, died. Agit Çeker and Ramazan Geçgel were dragged off in the direction of Görendoruk village wrapped up in the canvas of a military tent. Later it was learned that they were taken to the Gendarmerie Headquarters in Eruh, where they were subjected to further torture until their release on 27 July, one week later. Hasan Ekinçi was allowed to return to his village in a very poor condition as a result of the beating. He had difficulty in walking and, according to eyewitnesses, his chest and back were covered with bruises. All three shepherds had their identity cards confiscated, making it impossible for them to leave their village.

The body of Osman Ekinçi was delivered to his fellow villagers from Güneyce village (Kurdish: Banebatıyan), currently staying at their summer pasture in Birini, after examination by a doctor and a prosecutor in the Görendoruk security post. When the Güneyce village headman asked how Osman Ekinçi had died, a major at the post allegedly replied "He smoked a lot. He got sunstroke and died". There were widespread traces of blows on the body, while the sexual organs were allegedly crushed and torn. Osman Ekinçi was buried on Sunday, 21 July 1991.

The relatives of Osman Ekinçi have made an official complaint to the public prosecutor in Siirt, but to date neither they nor the three shepherds have been asked to give testimony about the incident. The relatives have not yet received a copy of the autopsy report.

Amnesty International is appealing to the Turkish authorities for a speedy, thorough and impartial investigation to be carried out into the death of Osman Ekinçi and into the alleged torture and ill-treatment of Agit Çeker, Ramazan Geçgel and Hasan Ekinçi. The organization is also requesting that the autopsy report be released to Osman Ekinçi's family.