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Turkey must end abusive use of force and reveal the extent of injuries

The number of activists injured across Turkey as a result of police abuse will continue to escalate unless the authorities bring police tactics in line with basic human rights standards, Amnesty International said today.

Demonstrations in cities including Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir continued for a third day amid unprecedented levels of police violence against protesters.

The authorities have not confirmed the number of people injured, which is believed to be in the thousands, some of whom remain in hospital in critical state.

“Three days after the start of an unprecedented wave of police repression against protesters, the Turkish authorities have shown little remorse and no indication of a change in police tactics,” said John Dalhuisen, Europe and Central Asia Programme Director at Amnesty International.

“It is essential that the Turkish authorities take action to stop police violence and learn the lessons for policing demonstrations in the future. They must also publish a full list of those injured after the protests, the nature of their injuries and ensure those responsible are held accountable.”

On Monday, police continued to use force against peaceful demonstrators, with reports of excessive force against hundreds of demonstrators in Ankara, Turkey’s capital city.

Larger demonstrations are expected on Monday evening.

The Turkish Medical Association told Amnesty International that as many as 1,500 people injured during the police response to protests have been treated in hospitals across Istanbul over the past two days. Two of them had life threatening injuries and five remain in intensive care as a result of injuries sustained at demonstrations in the city. Earlier reports that at least two protestors died as a result of participating in demonstrations on 1 June in Istanbul proved to be unfounded.

In Ankara, the number of injured demonstrators is reported as at least 414, with 15 individuals sustaining serious injuries.

According to information from the Izmir Medical Association, over the past two days 420 injured people were admitted to the western city’s hospitals.

The medical association reported that many of the injuries have been caused by the police using water cannon and firing tear gas canisters at demonstrators. The association is concerned that many people have lost their eyesight as a result of such police tactics.

“Water cannon and tear gas should not be used against peaceful protesters. We’re particularly concerned about the use of tear gas in confined spaces where it represents a major threat to health,” said Dalhuisen.

“The authorities must ensure that in the case of violent demonstrations police intervene only where strictly necessary to protect the public and property, in line with international human rights standards. Amnesty International also calls on protesters not to engage in violence.”

Amnesty International calls on the Turkish authorities to launch prompt, independent and impartial investigations into the policing of the demonstrations and to make the findings public.