

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety

TURKEY

Orhan Kemal Cengiz (m), lawyer, human rights defender and newspaper columnist

Orhan Kemal Cengiz, a lawyer, human rights defender and newspaper columnist, has been threatened and intimidated because of his legal work on behalf of one of three men killed in an attack at a Christian publishing house in April 2007. He has asked the authorities to provide him with a bodyguard to protect him. The authorities have not yet granted this request.

Orhan Kemal Cengiz has worked as a human rights defender in Turkey for around 15 years, including as a founding member of a number of human rights initiatives including Amnesty International Turkey and as a legal representative of victims of human rights violations from across the spectrum.

He has been threatened and intimidated on a number of occasions, intensifying since November 2007, when the trial began of those accused of killing the three men at the *Zirve* publishing house, in the south-eastern province of Malatya.

In November, Orhan Kemal Cengiz saw an article in a local newspaper in Malatya, which included details that he believes could only have been learnt through the interception of his telephone and electronic communications about the case. He later learned that a letter had been sent to the Malatya prosecutor accusing Orhan Kemal Cengiz of involvement in the murders at the *Zirve* publishing house. The letter also contained other false information apparently designed to damage his reputation and make him a target. Finally, in January 2008 Orhan Kemal Cengiz received a letter, the substance of which indicated it had been written by the same person or people who had sent the letter to the Malatya prosecutor. This letter purported to be a letter of support but in fact contained both veiled and direct threats to his safety.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 18 April 2007, two Turkish nationals and a German were murdered at the *Zirve* Christian publishing house in Malatya. The three had their hands and feet bound together and their throats cut. They were all staff at the publishing house. The *Zirve* staff had received death threats in the months before the murders.

Human rights defenders have a right to the protection of the state, like any other citizen. The failure to prevent the murder in 2007 of human rights defender and journalist Hrant Dink and the subsequent flaws in the investigation must not be repeated. Hrant Dink had reported threats to his life to the Public Prosecutor in Sisli. According to the indictment in the murder trial, one of the defendants also acted as a police informer and told the police of the plans to assassinate Hrant Dink numerous times in the months before the murder took place. Nevertheless, Hrant Dink was left unprotected. After the murder, the Istanbul Police Chief stated that the killing was the act of a gunman working alone. In addition, it was revealed that military police officers had posed with the alleged killer in photographs as if he was a "hero". Amnesty International believes that such actions contribute to the perception that sections of the law enforcement agencies are biased.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Orhan Kemal Cengiz;
- expressing concern that the threats against him are a direct result of his legitimate work as a lawyer and human rights defender;
- calling on them to provide immediate protection for him in the form of a bodyguard, as he has requested;

- calling for a prompt, thorough, impartial and independent investigation into the threats.

APPEALS TO:

Mr Ercument Yilmaz

Ankara Police Chief

Konya Yolu uzeri - Metro Akkopru Duragi Yani

06330 İskitler/Ankara

Turkey

Fax: +90 312 384 07 03

Salutation: Dear Chief of Police

Duty Prosecutor

Nobetci Savciligina

Ankara Cumhuriyet Savciligi

Ankara Adliye Binasi

Sihhiye/Ankara

Turkey

Fax: +90 312 3123940

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor

COPIES TO:

Mr Mehmet Ali Sahin

Minister of Justice

Ministry of Justice

Adalet Bakanligi

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Ministry of Interior

İcİsleri Bakanligi

06644 Ankara

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Fax + 90 312 418 1795

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 26 March 2008.