

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## Turkey: Justice for Hrant Dink

Amnesty International calls for all the evidence and circumstances to be considered as the trial of 18 people accused of involvement in the killing of Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink begins today in Istanbul. Hrant Dink was shot on 19 January 2007. The case will be heard in closed session at Besiktas Heavy Penal Court No.14, because one of the defendants is under 18 years of age.

"The Turkish authorities must ensure that, in examining the case, no stone is left unturned. All those involved in the killing of Hrant Dink -- those actively involved in planning and carrying out the fatal attack and those who failed to prevent it -- must be brought to justice," said Andrew Gardner, Amnesty International's researcher on Turkey.

"Hrant Dink's killing took place in the context of an increasing pattern of deadly intolerance of freedom of expression."

Amnesty International considers that Hrant Dink was targeted because of his work as a journalist who championed freedom of expression and promoted the universality of human rights. He had been repeatedly prosecuted under Article 301 of the Penal Code that criminalizes "denigrating Turkishness". The suspected gunman is alleged to have stated that he killed Hrant Dink after seeing him on television making statements which "denigrated Turkishness".

Hrant Dink had been receiving death threats for several months prior to his death. He had reported these to the Sisli public prosecutor in Istanbul. Reportedly one of those on trial in connection with his death had also acted as a police informer and had repeatedly told police of the plan to assassinate Hrant Dink in the months leading up to his death. Nevertheless, the authorities failed to take the necessary steps to ensure protection for him.

Before the investigation into Hrant Dink's death started, the Istanbul Police Chief made a statement to the effect that Hrant Dink's murder was not politically motivated or organized but rather the act of a lone gunman on the basis of nationalist sentiments. Amnesty International is concerned that such a statement, coming so quickly after the incident, not only could have jeopardized the impartiality of the subsequent investigation but also illustrated an official reluctance to examine the full scope of the case.

Amnesty International is also concerned about footage that appeared in the media of law enforcement officers posing with the suspected gunman in front of a Turkish flag as if he was a "hero". Such footage contributes to the perception that some sections of law enforcement agencies may be biased. While a number of officials have already been removed from office on grounds of negligence or failure of duty, Amnesty International is not aware of any proceedings taken against them to date.

Amnesty International is sending a representative to Istanbul for the first day of the hearing in the criminal case.

**See** *Turkey: Journalist targeted yet again* (AI Index: EUR 44/017/2006)

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engneur440172006> and

*Turkey: Turkish-Armenian journalist murdered* (AI Index: EUR 44/001/2007)

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engneur440012007>.

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For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566  
Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

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