

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

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Turkey: Police brutality against peaceful demonstrators

Amnesty International is greatly concerned by the disproportionate use of force by police officers against individuals who had gathered peacefully in Istanbul on 6 March to celebrate Women's Day early. Police used truncheons and pepper gas to disperse some 500 people who had gathered in the Sarachane and Beyazit quarters of Istanbul, which resulted in 63 individuals being detained and at least three people being reportedly hospitalized.

The police had reportedly intervened on the basis that the demonstration had not been authorized. While images of the ill-treatment received wide press coverage internationally because of the European Union Ministerial Troika that began in Ankara today, such scenes are regularly broadcast in Turkey in which police appear to particularly target demonstrators from opposition groups for brutal treatment.

The government has made numerous changes to the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations in an attempt to address concerns regarding the policing of demonstrations. However, allegations of ill-treatment during demonstrations have very rarely resulted in prosecution of law enforcement officials, and sanctions have often been limited. On the other hand, those complaining of ill-treatment are themselves frequently prosecuted for resistance to public officials or for violating Law No. 2911 on Meetings and Demonstrations.

Amnesty International welcomes news that the government has opened an investigation into the incident but calls on the authorities to publish the full findings of the investigation, to ensure that perpetrators of human rights violations are brought to justice and to take further urgent steps to ensure that police officers conform to international standards on the right to freedom of assembly and on the use of force.