

EXTERNAL

AI Index: EUR 44/09/96

18 January 1996

Further information on UA 38/95 (EUR 44/32/95, 15 February 1995) - Possible "disappearance" / Fear for safety

TURKEYOsman Künde_, Kurdish trade unionist, father of six

new names: Halit Ayd_n, dental technician
 Selahattin Yasak, teacher
 _akir Tanr_kulu
 Ahmet Günbat_
 Ekrem _a_maz_
 Halit Teymur
 Arif Gezici

On 12 January 1996 Osman Künde_, president of the Municipal Workers Union in Batman, and the seven people named above, who had been abducted by unknown persons in Batman during January and February 1995, were set free. This is the first case in Turkey where "disappeared" people have re-emerged alive after such a long period - almost a year - in captivity.

According to a newspaper report they had been held in specially prepared basements of houses in Batman and were freed in the course of police operations in Batman against the *Hizbullah* organization. During these operations some 30 people were detained, suspected of being *Hizbullah* members and having committed numerous murders.

Almost one year ago, on 6 February 1995, Osman Künde_ came home from his office in his trade union car. His 16-year-old son saw him arrive and went outside to greet his father. The son then witnessed two men aged between 20 and 25 approach his father and ask him to come with them on some urgent business. Osman Künde_ told them that he was hungry, as it was *Ramazan*, the fasting month, and would prefer to talk after the evening meal or better still the following day, but they insisted that it was urgent. So Osman Künde_ asked his son to come with them. The son went briefly inside the house to get his coat, but minutes later, when he came back outside, his father and the two men had gone. A woman who had observed the scene, later told that she saw Osman Künde_ sitting in the front passenger seat of his trade union car, while one of the men drove and the other sat in the back. A second car was following. The trade union car was found abandoned the following day about 70 kilometres away on the road between Batman and Kozluk.

Osman Künde_'s wife later reported that someone had telephoned her a few days after her husband's "disappearance", saying: "He is in the hands of the Muslims" (meaning the *Hizbullah*).

The *Hizbullah* referred to here is not linked to the Lebanon-based *Hizbullah*, but is a shadowy organization established in Batman in 1987 and divided between two wings - the *Ilim* and the *Menzil*. Many political killings have been attributed to the *Ilim* wing. Relatives of "disappeared" people have told Amnesty International that they believe that *Hizbullah* is acting in collusion with the security forces.

There have been several waves of arrests of *Hizbullah* members from both wings, and trials opened against some of these. After receiving several reports that detained *Hizbullah* suspects were being released without prosecution, Amnesty

International repeatedly wrote to the Turkish Government asking for information about the progress of these prosecutions, but received no reply. In one important case, however, that of Kurdish member of parliament Mehmet Sincar, killed in the heavily policed city of Batman in broad daylight in 1987, it later emerged that of 15 suspects detained, "three confessed to having participated in the killing [of Mehmet Sincar] together with two others, all presumed to be members of the radical illegal organization which calls itself Hizbullah", according to the Turkish Embassy in Madrid in December 1993. Only in 1995 a report issued by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) revealed that according to the Turkish Ministry of Justice "all those originally detained for the killing were acquitted in November 1994 for lack of evidence".

Amnesty International believes that there are grounds for fears that such arrests and prosecutions are carried out for the sake of appearance rather than as a serious legal measure against armed groups such as *Hizbullah*, implicated in the killing and "disappearance" of political opponents of the government.

Amnesty International will continue to investigate the circumstances surrounding Osman Künde_'s "disappearance", but no further action by the Urgent Action Network is required on this case. Thanks all those who sent appeals on behalf of Osman Künde_.