

25 January 2001

AI Index EUR 44/009/2001 - News Service Nr. 16

## **Turkey - Prison critics in danger**

*Amnesty International is seriously concerned that the vital work of the Turkish Human Rights Association (IHD) is being deliberately impeded by the Turkish government.*

*The Ankara headquarters of IHD was raided this morning by security police who confiscated all five of the computer hard-disks on which the Association stores information. Documents were also removed. The raid followed the broadcast on Turkish television news of reports alleging that IHD has received funding from the Greek Foreign Ministry. IHD vigorously denies the claim.*

*The confiscation of computer equipment and documents represents a breach of the right of human rights defenders to carry out their work free from government interference.*

*The broadcast of the allegations, which Amnesty International regards with extreme scepticism, follows a concerted and high profile campaign by IHD against the forced transfer of prisoners to so-called F-Type prisons. A high profile transfer operation in December 2000 led to the deaths of at least 30 prisoners and two police officers.*

*Human rights defenders and supporters of the hunger striking prisoners have come under increasing pressure in recent weeks as the Turkish government has attempted to silence criticism of the new prison system. Many have been threatened, beaten or detained, and the authorities have indicated that criticism of the new prison system may be deemed a criminal offence. Six IHD branches were closed down in*

January while the Ankara branch is under investigation for having supported hunger striking prisoners.

"If Turkey is serious about improving its human rights record it must accept that human rights defenders should be allowed to work without fear of intimidation or smear," Amnesty International said. "The Turkish government must return the confiscated equipment and ensure that all human rights defenders are safe to do their vital work."

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