

**PUBLIC**

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**Fear for safety**

**17 April 2003**

**TURKEY**

**Ercan Tasdemirler (m)**

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of activist Ercan Tasdemirler who has received threatening phone calls on his mobile telephone between 26 March and 16 April. His lawyer has submitted a request to the Izmir Chief Prosecutor to investigate the source of the calls and to bring those responsible to justice in order to ensure Ercan Tasdemirler's safety.

Ercan Tasdemirler was reportedly called on his mobile phone on eight separate occasions. He was able to register the times the calls were made and the telephone numbers of the callers. Each of the calls was brief and he was threatened on three occasions. In one call he was told "We will screw your mother. You're dead". In another call he was told "I screwed your mother", and on another occasion "What a fag you are". Ercan Tasdemirler knows of no-one personally who bears him any ill-will and was unable to recognize the callers' voices.

On 13 December 2000, Ercan Tasdemirler was detained after a press conference and beaten in custody. He was then charged with contravening Law 2911 on meetings and demonstrations, in a case which is still in the Court of Appeals. As a result of his experiences in custody on that occasion, the Izmir Chief Prosecutor opened a case in the Izmir 16<sup>th</sup> Court of First Instance in 2002, against 21 police from the Izmir Police Headquarters Security Division, for ill-treatment of Ercan Tasdemirler and two of his friends. The first hearing is due to take place on 6 May 2003. The case has also been submitted to the European Court of Human Rights.

Ercan Tasdemirler was once again detained on 26 March 2003 for making a statement against the war in Iraq, and charged with aiding and abetting an illegal organization. He was released from custody on 27 March, which was when the threatening telephone calls began. Six other individuals who were detained with him have not been subjected to such telephone calls.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

On 14 April 2003, the Court of Appeals finalized its decision on the case of the ten police and one police commissioner accused of torturing 14 young people in Manisa, an hour from Izmir in the west of Turkey in 1995. This confirmed a landmark decision by an earlier court on 16 October 2002 and was welcomed by Amnesty International as a firm message that torture would not be tolerated (see News Service No. 183 AI Index EUR 44/052/2002). The April 2003 decision closes all domestic lines of appeal to the police officers and confirmed the sentences handed down. In the most severe sentences for torture to date in Turkey, 11 police were given long jail sentences. This case opens the possibility that police who ill-treat suspects in custody face serious punishment. Amnesty International is concerned some police may utilise threats to avoid punishment and there have been allegations that this has been the case when other individuals have put allegations of torture or ill-treatment before the European Court of Human Rights.

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

- expressing concern at the threatening calls received by Ercan Tasdemirler;
- calling for immediate steps be taken to guarantee his safety in accordance with his wishes;
- urging the authorities to conduct a full and impartial investigation into the threatening calls, for the results to be made public and for those responsible to be brought to justice;

- expressing concern that the threats appear to be related the forthcoming case on 6 May 2003 against the 21 police officers from the Izmir Police Headquarters Security Division accused of ill-treating Ercan Tasdemirler and his two friends.

**APPEALS TO:**

Minister of the Interior

Mr Abdulkadir Aksu

Ministry of Interior

İçişleri Bakanligi

06644 Ankara, Turkey

**Telegram:** Interior Minister, Ankara, Turkey

**Fax:** + 90 312 418 17 95

**Salutation:** Dear Minister

**COPIES TO:**

State Minister with responsibility for Human Rights

Mr Ertugrul Yalçınbayir

Office of the Prime Minister,

Basbakanlik,

06573 Ankara, Turkey

**Fax:** + 90 312 417 04 76

**Salutation:** Dear Minister

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 29 May 2003.