

AI INDEX: EUR 44/14/98
19 March 1998

PUBLIC STATEMENT

TURKEY

Court of Appeal overturns prison sentences against student prisoners of conscience

Following intense campaigning by Amnesty International and by student groups inside Turkey, yesterday the Ninth Chamber of the Court of Appeal overturned a series of heavy prison sentences which had been imposed on five students by Ankara State Security Courts.

Students who had been conducting a peaceful campaign for changes to the education system had been subjected to torture in police custody and sentenced to up to 18 years' imprisonment on apparently bogus charges of membership of an illegal organization.

The sentences were overturned on technical grounds including that the prosecution had failed to investigate whether the illegal organization of which the students were supposed to be members actually existed -- an issue raised in an Amnesty International report last September.

In recent months Amnesty International sections arranged public meetings in Belgium, France, Germany, Holland and Israel where fellow students from Turkey spoke and showed films to raise awareness of this case as well as meeting politicians and government representatives.

The five students, Ahmet A_k_n Do_an, Özgür Tüfekçi, Bülent Karaka_, Metin Murat Kalyoncugil and Mahmut Y_lmaz, are still in custody pending a second hearing of the trial. Amnesty International will continue to campaign for their release and for the prosecution of their torturers.

For further information please refer to Amnesty International report: *Student campaigners tortured and imprisoned*, September 1997; AI Index: EUR 44/54/97.