

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

29 March 2002

AI Index EUR 44/016/2002 - News Service Nr. 42

Turkey: Registration of AI is a step forward in human rights

The successful registration of Amnesty International in Turkey is a welcome, positive move by the Turkish government, said Amnesty International as its founding members in Turkey received official notification of this.

"This is an important step towards the establishment of a fully-fledged Amnesty International section in Turkey that will open the way for Turkish citizens to contribute widely to our international campaigns on other countries and strengthen Amnesty International's worldwide effort to promote and protect human rights."

The organization clearly stated that while this registration makes it possible for Amnesty International's membership in Turkey to build an awareness and understanding of human rights in Turkey through human rights education and awareness programs and by working for improvements in legislation, it does not affect the on-going research work on Turkey. The newly registered Amnesty International structure in Turkey will not be involved in any research activities on that country: that work will continue to be carried out by the organization's International Secretariat based in London.

Although the granting of this registration is an important step towards improved freedom of association in Turkey, Amnesty International remains concerned about freedom of association and freedom of expression in Turkey.

The existing Law on Associations has been used to seriously impede the activities of associations contrary to the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. For instance Ridvan Kizgin, head of the Human Rights Association (IHD) Bingol branch, was suspended from chairmanship by decision of the Governor of Bingol under Article 45 of this law. This was because he had apparently denied access to police officers who wanted to follow and video-tape a training program in the IHD branch on the occasion of the International Day against Violence against Women on 25 November 2001. The decision to suspend Ridvan Kizgin from his chairmanship was revised in early January 2002, but Ridvan Kizgin will have to stand trial. He was arrested again in January 2002 and remanded to prison.

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