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TURKEY: Torture of 13-year-old in Istanbul

On 7 November 1994, an envelope with money and cheques disappeared from the handbag of one of the owners at the Dual Konfeksiyon garment workshop/store in the _i_i district of Istanbul. Suspicion fell on three workers busy decorating a shop window and on the 13-year-old apprentice Abdullah who had been asked to look after the telephone while the owner of the handbag was occupied with a visitor, but who had also been sent away briefly to buy bread. When a search of the three adult workers, the apprentice and the workshop brought no result, their employers informed the police. The four suspects were taken to the local police station and from there to the _i_i Investigation Bureau where statements were taken from the three adult workers. They were released the same evening (after having paid the police a bribe, according to one newspaper report). Abdullah Salman, however, remained in police custody until 9 November. Although he protested his innocence, police kept interrogating him and eventually resorted to torture to obtain a confession.

His mother learned of his detention when a relative telephoned her. When she arrived at the police station, the police at the door allegedly told her: "*We consider your son to be our own son. Don't worry, we won't so much as flick him. He is inside, sitting on a chair.*"

Abdullah Salman described what really happened: "*After they took us to the Investigation Bureau, they released H. Z. I stayed there with the other two people. After a while, a police officer took me to the lower floor. Then the Chief Superintendent came. He said to me, 'I think you took the money'. I said, 'No, abî, I didn't take it'. He said, 'Why do you tell lies, bastard' and began to hit me.*

"Later he choked me and lay me on the ground. He again began to choke me, and lifted me up and threw me down a few times. While I was on the ground he hit my knees, and punched me twice.

"Some time later they blindfolded me and trod on my hands. They took the sock off my left foot and tied something to it. Then they began to give me electric shocks. My soul really burned (meaning: it really hurt)! First I thought he had cut off my toe, then it was as if my body did not work from the waist down. Every now and then they hit my head. When they were giving me the electric shocks, it was as if it would never end. This went on for three days. When I shouted out, those in the room shut my mouth and laughed."

At midnight on 8 November the boy was returned home and left there for the night. According to his mother, Abdullah was in such a shock that he ran away even from his mother when he saw her. The police returned the following morning at 7am and took Abdullah back to the police station.

After three days of torture the police "remembered" the Criminal Procedure Code which stipulates that those detained for criminal offences must have access to legal counsel, and called a lawyer, who on arriving at the police station saw the boy's bruised body. The lawyer demanded access to a doctor for Abdullah.

The medical report from _i_i Forensic Medicine Institute certified: "*On the left side of the knee, 2x3cm bruise (from a blow), on the left small toe, an erosion (bruise), on the back of the upper left forearm 1 x 4 cm erosion, erosion in front and around the neck,*

¹ 'elder brother' - informal term of deference

erosions behind the left ear, on the right shoulder - the width of a palm -, and on the right side of the back. Erosion on the left underside of the chin, cheek, left kneecap. Unable to work for three days."

On 9 November, the prosecutor released Abdullah Salman. Since then the family have been informed by the owner of the workshop that the stolen money (cheques and 100 million Turkish Lira in cash) had been recovered. It had been stolen by one of the other workers at the workshop. For Abdullah, however, the story was far from being over. *"In the nights he was waking up screaming, I didn't steal it, abi'. When he sees a police officer in the street, he runs and tries to hide. No human being could do this to a 13-year-old child",* says his mother.

Abdullah Salman was examined for five days at the psychiatric unit of Çapa Medical Faculty where the psychiatrist found the traumatized boy to be "mentally subnormal". He will be examined again six months later to assess to what extent his treatment at the hands of the police is responsible for this condition.

Abdullah Salman's mother has lodged a formal complaint against the police with the public prosecutor in _i. However, no investigation has yet been opened and to Amnesty International's knowledge none of the police officers who interrogated Abdullah Salman have been suspended from duty. The prosecutor's office is said to be awaiting the outcome of the second psychiatric examination, and the prosecutor assigned to the case due to be transferred to another post. _aziye Salman also alleges that the police called her to the police station after the case had appeared in the newspapers and later offered her a bribe if she dropped her complaint against the police officers involved in her son's detention and torture. She is reported to have said that this was a case which could not be dropped: *"They said they would do nothing and brought him to this state. What happened to my son today, will it not happen to others tomorrow?"*

Amnesty International is appealing for a prompt and full investigation of the torture of 13-year-old Abdullah Salman in Istanbul and for those responsible to be brought to justice.