

PUBLIC

AI Index: EUR 44/018/2001

28 March 2001

Further information on UA 11/01 (EUR 44/004/2001, 19 January 2001) - Arbitrary detention/fair trial concern/ill-treatment

TURKEYSix children, aged 14 to 16

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**New names: seven other children arrested with them**

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The six Kurdish children were released from prison after a trial hearing on 15 February. However, they and seven of the children arrested with them are facing charges under which they could be imprisoned for several years. If convicted, Amnesty International would consider them prisoners of conscience, as they have not committed or advocated violence, and may well have been prosecuted solely because of their ethnic identity.

The children have been charged with "supporting the illegal organization PKK and facilitating their activities by participating in an unauthorised demonstration in protest against the F-type prisons, and applauding and shouting slogans in favour of the PKK". Amnesty International is concerned that the only evidence against them is allegations and "confessions" believed to have been made under duress. The next trial hearing will be on 5 April.

One of the boys on trial, SE (16), apparently does not know any Turkish at all. He only understood the charges against him in the courtroom, when they were translated into Kurdish. At the 15 February trial hearing the children rejected the statements they had given immediately after their arrest, saying they had been forced to make these statements.

The children's lawyers has filed a formal complaint against the police for ill-treating the children. They have also filed a request for compensation on the grounds that the children were held in detention without any justification.

Charges against the other fifteen children arrested with them on 9 January have been dropped for lack of evidence.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The prosecution of these children is part of a pattern of discrimination against Kurds living in southeastern Turkey.

Six of the children have told an Amnesty International representative that they and their families were forced to leave their village in the Derik district of Mardin province in 1993. Since then they have been living in a squatter settlement. They have been trying to return to their village, but have apparently been prevented from doing so. The families are supporting themselves with seasonal work. The men and children can find work harvesting crops in the summer, but usually have no income at all during the winter.

**FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:**

- welcoming the fact that the six children have been released from prison, but urging the authorities to immediately drop all charges against them and the seven other children;

- asking the authorities to order a prompt, impartial, independent and thorough investigation into the allegations that the children were ill-treated by police, and that they were held in the Police Headquarters in cruel, inhuman and degrading conditions;
- asking them to ensure that all police officers reasonably suspected of involvement are suspended from duty while they are under investigation, and that the children receive adequate compensation;
- urging the authorities to ensure that statements made under any kind of duress are excluded from evidence in any proceedings against the children.

**APPEALS TO:**

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**Telegrams: Interior Minister, Ankara, Turkey**

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

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

Minister of Justice

Prof Hikmet Sami Türk

Ministry of Justice

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**Salutation: Dear Minister**

State Minister responsible for women and children

Mr Hasan Gemici

Office of the Prime Minister

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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 9 May 2001.