

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: EUR 44/27/91
Distr: UA/SC

UA 68/91

Fear of Torture/Health Concern

26 February 1991

TURKEY: Veysel Yakmaz, aged 17

On 24 February 1991 Veysel Yakmaz was detained in Diyarbak_r. He is being held incommunicado at the headquarters of the "Rapid Force" anti-riot police (Cevik Kuvvet) in Diyarbak_r. The reason for his detention is not known. It is feared that he may be interrogated under torture, and there is added concern for his health. Veysel Yakmaz has previously suffered from the effects of a head injury which occurred during a road accident and any ill-treatment may seriously aggravate his condition.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Turkey has a Kurdish ethnic minority which is not officially recognized by the authorities, but is estimated to number some 10 million people. The Kurdish population lives mainly in southeastern Turkey. Frequent allegations of torture and ill-treatment have been received from the region and the number of torture allegations increased substantially after the 1980 military coup. Since August 1984, when Kurdish guerrillas - members of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) - started armed attacks, an alarming number of reports of ill-treatment of detainees by the security forces have come from the eastern and southeastern provinces, where more than 2000 lives so far have been lost in the continuing fighting.

In May 1990 the Turkish government issued Decrees 424 and 425 (in December replaced by Decree 430), further extending the already extraordinary powers of the Emergency Legislation Governor. Subsequently, in August 1990, the government derogated from Articles 5, 6, 8, 10, 11 and 13 of the European Convention on Human Rights, all of which contain important safeguards for human rights.

Turkey ratified the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture on 25 February 1988 and the UN Convention Against Torture on 2 August 1988. However, all information available to Amnesty International indicates that torture is still widespread and systematic in Turkey. Allegations of torture have continued since the transfer of power to a civilian government in 1983. Most allegations relate to ill-treatment of detainees in police custody during their initial interrogation when they are usually denied access to relatives or a lawyer. Under current legislation the maximum detention period before being formally charged or released is 24 hours; in cases involving three or more suspects or due to the 'nature of the crime' it may be extended to 15 days. This period may be extended to 30 days in areas under emergency legislation or martial law. Emergency legislation is currently in force in ten provinces, including Diyarbak_r.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- urging that Veysel Yakmaz is given prompt access to his family and lawyer and that he is not ill-treated while in detention;
- requesting to be informed of any charges against him.

APPEALS TO:

Diyarbakir Chief of Police:
Diyarbakir Emniyet Müdürü
Ramazan Er
Diyarbakir, Turkey

Telegrams: Emniyet Müdürü, Diyarbakir, Turkey
Faxes: +90 83 11 19 56

Emergency Legislation Governor:
Hayri Kozakç_o_lu
Ola_anüstü Hal Val_s_
Diyarbak_r, Turkey

Telegrams: Hayri Kozakç_o_lu, Ola_anüstü Hal Val_s_, Diyarbak_r, Turkey
Telexes: 72084 DYVA TR; 72080/1/2; 72110 OHVT TR
Faxes: +90 83 12 61 74

President Turgut Özal
Office of the President
Devlet Ba_kanl____
06100 Ankara, Turkey

Telegrams: President Özal, Ankara, Turkey
Telexes: 42875 BBK TR
Faxes: (via Press Office) + 90 4 168 5012

COPIES TO: Diplomatic representatives of Turkey in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 9 April 1991.