

EXTERNAL

AI Index: EUR 44/29/97

EXTRA 53/97

Prisoner of conscience

18 April 1997

TURKEY _anar Yurdatapan, musician, human rights activist

_anar Yurdatapan, spokesperson for the "Together for Peace" initiative (BIBA - Bar__ İçin Biraraya) and a leading composer and performer of contemporary music, was detained at Istanbul Atatürk Airport late on 16 April 1997 on his return from a brief visit to Germany. He is currently held at the Anti-Terror Branch of Istanbul Police Headquarters. Amnesty International believes that he has been detained solely on account of his energetic investigation of human rights violations and campaigning for peace and freedom of speech, and that he is therefore a prisoner of conscience held in breach of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, to which Turkey is a state party.

The authorities did not admit to holding _anar Yurdatapan until the afternoon of 17 April. In the early hours of 17 April the police raided his office in Üsküdar, Istanbul, and detained the cleaner and two other staff members, all of whom were later released. The prosecutor has given permission for _anar Yurdatapan to be held incommunicado until 21 April. His police detention may be extended until 24 April when he will be brought before a court and released or formally arrested.

_anar Yurdatapan was previously detained in Istanbul on 15 October 1996. He was held in Ankara Central Closed Prison for a month before being released (see UA 240/96, EUR 44/161/96, 18 October and update, 12 November, and UA NEWS, December 1996, page 12).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

_anar Yurdatapan was also the prime mover of the "Freedom of Thought" initiative, a group of more than a thousand intellectuals, academics, writers and artists. The tactic this group adopted in order to challenge the continued imprisonment of people for the expression of their non-violent opinions was to republish under their own name any text subject to prosecution in the State Security Courts. This tactic was consciously based on the Voltairean principle of defending the right of all to express their ideas even if one strongly disagrees with those ideas. The large-scale trials of notable Turkish literary figures which have followed are deservedly proving an embarrassment to prosecutors, judges and the legislation.

_anar Yurdatapan also organized an investigative delegation to Güçlükonak, the scene of a massacre of 11 men in January 1996. At first this massacre was publicised as having been carried out by the PKK, in breach of their own unilateral ceasefire (the European Parliament had just before called upon the Turkish Government to respond positively to the ceasefire). Shortly afterwards, doubts about the official story began to emerge, chiefly from the families of the victims of the massacre. The delegation led by _anar Yurdatapan was drawn from a wide spectrum of international, professional and human rights organizations. Its investigations left little doubt that government security forces carried out the killings. _anar Yurdatapan filed a formal accusation against the Chief of Staff for their role in spreading misinformation about the massacre, and in response was himself charged and prosecuted with "insulting the spiritual identity of the state."

_anar Yurdatapan was a speaker at Amnesty International's Austrian Section on 1 October 1996, on the occasion of the launch of a worldwide campaign to

secure progress in human rights in Turkey. He has also visited several other Amnesty International sections as a guest, and was due to visit the Irish Section later this month. He was guest speaker at a meeting held by Amnesty International at the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva in March.

_anar Yurdatapan lived in exile in Germany from the late 1970s until 1991. He was deprived of Turkish citizenship because of his strong public criticism of the generals who seized power in 1980.

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

- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of _anar Yurdatapan, held in contravention of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights;
- seeking assurances that he is being treated humanely and urging that he be given immediate access to a lawyer, family and doctor;
- expressing dismay at the constant harassment of Turkish citizens who work to defend human rights enshrined in international treaties and in the Turkish Constitution.

APPEALS TO:

1. President Süleyman Demirel

Office of the President

Cumhurba_kanl____

06100 Ankara

Telegrams: Cumhurbaşkanlığı, Ankara, Turkey

Telexes: 42303 kosk tr

Faxes: +90 312 468 5026

Salutation: Your Excellency

2. Chief Prosecutor at Istanbul State Security Court:

Mr Erdal Güven

DGM Ba_savc_s_

Devlet Güvenlik Mahkemesi

Istanbul, Turkey

Telegrams: DGM Ba_savc_s_, _stanbul, Turkey

Telex: 0607 30187 eist tr; 0607 30188 iemd tr

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor

COPIES TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Mrs Tansu Çiller

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

D_i_leri Bakanl____

06100 Ankara, Turkey

Fax: +90 312 419 1547

and 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 30 April 1997.