

EXTRA 75/97

Fear of torture

22 May 1997

TURKEY Mahmut _akar, lawyer, Vice-President of Human Rights Association (IHD) and President of its Diyarbak_r branch
Sinan Tanr_kulu, lawyer, board member of IHD and secretary of Diyarbak_r branch
Vedat Çetin, board member of IHD Diyarbak_r
Pirozhan Do_rul (f), board member of IHD Diyarbak_r
Özlem Çetin (f), board member of IHD Diyarbak_r (not related to Vedat Ç.)
Nebahat Akkoç (f), board member of IHD Diyarbak_r
Haydar K_l_ço_lu, President of Diyarbak_r branch of E_itim-Sen (Teachers' trade union)

On the morning of 22 May 1997 lawyer Sinan Tanr_kulu, board member of the Turkish Human Rights Association (IHD) and secretary of its Diyarbak_r branch, was attending a hearing at the State Security Court in Diyarbak_r when he was detained by police. When fellow lawyer Mahmut _akar, IHD's Vice-President and President of the Diyarbak_r branch, went to the State Security Court to make inquiries about Sinan Tanr_kulu's detention, he too was taken into police custody.

At 12.30pm on 22 May the Diyarbak_r IHD office was searched by officers of the Anti-Terror Branch, the Associations Branch and the Press Departments Branch of Diyarbak_r Police Headquarters, with a search warrant from Diyarbak_r State Security Court No.3. They confiscated copies of magazines, books and correspondence of the branch and detained IHD board members Vedat Çetin, Pirozhan Do_rul and Özlem Çetin. Their houses were also searched and Nebahat Akkoç, another board member, was detained.

The President of the Diyarbak_r branch of the teachers' union E_itim-Sen was also detained, and other members of the union are being searched for by the police.

The reason for the police operation is not yet known. Amnesty International is concerned that those named above may have been detained solely on account of their work as human rights defenders or trade unionists. It fears that the detainees may be interrogated under torture.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Mahmut _akar was previously detained in December 1994 and put on trial together with other lawyers and officials of the Diyarbak_r IHD branch, charged under the Anti-Terror Law with membership of an armed organization. Bogus charges of involvement with illegal organizations are frequently brought against human rights activists, journalists, trade unionists and other people publicly critical of the government's human rights record, in order to discredit their activities.

Sinan Tanr_kulu was previously detained in February 1995 together with four other branch members in a similar raid on the office of the Diyarbak_r IHD and charged in the same trial as Mahmut _akar. He later reported that during his 10 days in incommunicado detention he was tortured, including by hosing with pressurized cold water and squeezing of the testicles (see UA 450/94, 22 December 1994, EUR 44/157/94 and eight updates to 1 May 1995).

Sources of information on human rights abuses in the context of the armed conflict in southeast Turkey are being systematically stifled. Scrutiny of the grievous human rights situation by outside agencies is becoming increasingly difficult. In its attempt to conceal the true extent of human rights violations in Turkey, the government is prosecuting Turkish human rights defenders and the various branches of the Turkish Human Rights Association, as well as the Turkish Human Rights Foundation. The authorities are closing down branches of the Association and taking other measures curtailing the freedom of opposition press and political organizations. Two of Amnesty International's researchers on Turkey have been forbidden entry to Turkey since September 1994 and June 1995, respectively.

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

- expressing grave concern about the new raid on the office of the Turkish Human Rights Association in Diyarbak_r and the detention of its leading officials, including the lawyers Mahmut _akar and Sinan Tanr_kulu;
- seeking assurances that they will not be subjected to torture or any other form of ill-treatment;
- requesting to be informed of any charges brought against them.

APPEALS TO:

1. President Süleyman Demirel

Office of the President

Cumhurba_kanl____

06100 Ankara

Telegrams: Cumhurbaskanligi, Ankara, Turkey

Telexes: 42303 kosk tr

Faxes: +90 312 468 5026

Salutation: Your Excellency

2. Minister of Justice:

Mr Sevket Kazan

Adalet Bakanl____

06659 Ankara, Turkey

Telegrams: Justice Minister, Ankara, Turkey

Faxes: +90 312 425 4066; 417 3954

Salutation: Dear Minister

3. Chief Prosecutor's Office Diyarbak_r

Diyarbak_r Ba_savc_s_

Ba_savc_l____

Diyarbak_r, Turkey

Telegrams: Bassavciligi, Diyarbakir, Turkey

Salutation: Dear Chief Prosecutor

4. Emergency Legislation Governor

Mr Necati Bilican

Ola_anüstü Hal Valisi

Diyarbak_r, Turkey

Telegrams: Olaganustu Hal Valisi, Diyarbakir, Turkey

Telex: 72110 OHVT TR

72084 DYVA TR "please forward to the Governor"

72090 JASY TR

Salutation: Dear Governor

COPIES TO:

State Minister with responsibility for Human Rights:

Mr Lütfü Esengün

Office of the Prime Minister

Ba_bakanl_k

06573 Ankara, Turkey

Faxes: +90 312 417 0476

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 22 June 1997.