

PUBLIC

AI Index: EUR 44/41/00

UA

Fear for safety / ill-treatment

2 August 2000

TURKEY

Political prisoners transferred from Bergama to Buca prison

Political prisoners being transferred between two prisons in western Turkey have reportedly been ill-treated and severely beaten. Amnesty International is concerned that other prisoners across Turkey might also face serious ill-treatment.

An escape tunnel was reportedly discovered in Bergama prison on 25 July, and 75 political prisoners were transferred to Buca prison four days later. After the tunnel was discovered, political prisoners had barricaded themselves into one ward and set other wards on fire on 26 July. Prison guards and gendarmes - soldiers who guard prison buildings, but should not normally have any direct contact with prisoners - stormed the ward, breaking down the walls with bulldozers and using tear gas.

No prisoners were injured when the security forces retook the ward. However, when the 75 were transferred to Buca prison, they were reportedly thrown one on top of another into prison vans, which waited for two hours in the heat of the day in front of Buca prison. Several prisoners passed out. When they were eventually brought in, the prisoners were beaten by guards and gendarmes, who picked out certain prisoners for further beatings when they had been brought to the second floor. One prisoner, Mesut Avci, is said to have had his jaw broken, and is having to be fed with a baby's feeding bottle. Another, Mesut Tastemur, reportedly had his left shoulder dislocated. Other prisoners have injuries from the beating and breathing problems caused by the tear gas used in Bergama prison.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In early July prisoners involved in a mutiny at Burdur prison were reportedly severely beaten, tortured and sexually assaulted when the authorities retook the ward they had occupied (see UA 200/00, EUR 44/34/00, 6 July). Six of the prisoners involved in the mutiny were transferred to Bergama prison. Amnesty International has photographs of these prisoners, which show them bruised and battered, corroborating the reports that excessive force was used in ending the mutiny.

Amnesty International has long been concerned about conditions in Turkish prisons. In September 1999 10 prisoners died and dozens were injured in a violent clash with guards and soldiers in Ankara Central Closed Prison. The circumstances of the deaths were disputed and lawyers and relatives of the dead were excluded from the autopsy. A recent report on the incident by the Turkish Parliamentary Human Rights Commission concluded that excessive force had been used. The security officers involved are under investigation.

Prison conditions are currently the subject of intense debate in Turkey. At present most prisoners are housed in large wards that hold 60 or sometimes more prisoners. Many prisons have now built wings based on a cell-type system, which are due to be put into use in the next few months. The prisoners and their families fear that these will be used as isolation cells and have said that they will resist being moved to them.

The treatment of prisoners during transfer to and from prison has also long been of concern to Amnesty International. Prisoners are usually transferred to other prisons or to court by gendarmes. Amnesty International has received numerous accounts of prisoners being beaten and ill-treated during these transfers and has repeatedly called on the Turkish authorities to ensure that remand and convicted prisoners are never brought into contact with police and gendarmerie.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or German:

- calling on the Turkish authorities to ensure that prisoners throughout the country are managed by prison staff under the authority of the Justice Ministry, and not brought into contact with police and gendarmes;
- urging that the allegations that prisoners from Bergama were ill-treated and severely beaten when they were transferred to Buca Prison are investigated, and that the prisoners receive the necessary medical treatment;
- urging that lawyers and relatives are given access to prisoners;
- reminding the Turkish government of its obligations under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, to which Turkey is a state party: "No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment".

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Justice

Professor Hikmet Sami Türk

Adalet Bakan_

Adalet Bakanl____,

06659 Ankara, Turkey

Telegrams: **Adalet Bakan_, Ankara, Turkey**

Faxes: **+ 90 312 418 5667**

Salutation: **Dear Minister**

COPIES TO:

State Minister with responsibility for Human Rights

Mr Rü_tü Kaz_m Yücelen

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 13 September 2000.