

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of Torture

3 May 1991

TURKEY: Metin Yildirim, aged 32, Human Rights Association member

In the afternoon of 30 April, Metin Yildirim left home saying that he would be back shortly. He never returned and has meanwhile been reported to have been taken to the Political Branch of Istanbul Police Headquarters, where he is being held in incommunicado detention. He was previously detained and tortured and it is feared that he may be subjected to torture again.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Labour Day, 1 May, has a special meaning for workers and students in Turkey. In 1977 some 500,000 people rallied in Taksim Square, Istanbul, when sudden shooting by unknown assassins created a panic and left 36 people dead. Since the military coup in 1980, Labour Day has been abolished as a public holiday and demonstrations and rallies have been banned, but the day retained its symbolic meaning. Both peaceful and violent actions by small groups have been the target of intensified security measures each year leading to the arrest of many political activists before and on Labour Day. This year some 20,000 policemen were reported on duty in Istanbul alone and hundreds of people arrested throughout the country.

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 in the east and southeast of the country.

In August 1990, the Turkish 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.

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

- urging that Metin Yildirim 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

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Mr Abdülkadir Aksu
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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 14 June 1991.