

EXTERNAL

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EXTRA 108/97

Prisoners of conscience / Fear of torture

5 August 1997

TURKEY Human rights defenders detained:

Cemil Aydo_an, chairperson, HRA Mardin branch
Veysi Par_lt_, secretary, HRA Mardin
A. Vahap Bak_, treasurer, HRA Mardin
Aslan Ba_bo_a, executive board member, HRA Mardin
Hasan Kaymaz, executive board member, HRA Mardin

On 4 August 1997, as the above-named officials of the Turkish Human Rights Association (HRA) branch in Mardin were preparing the branch's annual financial report, police came to their office and detained them. The police are said to have presented no search warrant nor any identification. The branch office was then closed down and the HRA officials were taken to Mardin Police Headquarters, reportedly on orders of the State Prosecutor. An application by the HRA for information as to the detainees' whereabouts and the reasons for their detention has so far been unsuccessful.

Under current legislation they can be held incommunicado for four days, and then for a further three days on order of a judge, during which time they would have the right of access to legal counsel.

It is feared that the detainees, whom Amnesty International considers to be prisoners of conscience, may be subjected to torture or ill-treatment in incommunicado detention.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The HRA is an independent organization founded in 1986 by a group of lawyers, publishers, artists and human rights activists to monitor abuses and to protect human rights. Since its foundation the HRA has outspokenly condemned violations of human rights committed by government agencies and armed opposition groups. The HRA's centre is in Ankara, but it now has 59 branches throughout the country and some 20,000 members. From the start the HRA has faced considerable pressure from the authorities. Many HRA members, however, have paid for their courageous defence of human rights with imprisonment and torture, and some even with their lives. No less than 10 HRA members have been killed in the past five years. Members of the HRA have received death threats by letter and telephone.

Official pressure on the HRA has been intense over recent weeks. Members have been detained, and various branches have been searched or closed down. The branches in Konya, Malatya and Izmir have since been reopened, whereas those in Diyarbak_r, _anl_urfa, Bal_kesir and Mardin remain closed.

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

- expressing deep concern about the recent closure of several offices of the Turkish Human Rights Association, most recently that of its branch in Mardin, and the detention on 4 August 1997 of five of its leading officials: Cemil Aydo_an, Veysi Par_lt_, A. Vahap Bak_, Aslan Ba_bo_a and Hasan Kaymaz;
- pointing out that they are considered by Amnesty International to be prisoners of conscience and calling for their immediate and unconditional release;
- urging that they not be subjected to torture or any other form of ill-treatment;

- requesting to be informed of the reasons for their detention and the closure of the HRA Mardin branch.

APPEALS TO:

Note: It may currently take several attempts to obtain a fax tone for numbers below.

1. Prime Minister:

Mr Mesut Y_lmaz
Office of the Prime Minister
Ba_bakanl_k
06573 Ankara, Turkey
Telegrams: Prime Minister, Ankara, Turkey
Telex: 44061/44062/44063 bbmt tr/ 42099 basb tr
Faxes: +90 312 417 0476
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

2. Minister of the Interior:

Mr Murat Ba_eskio_lu
Içisleri Bakanl____
Ankara, Turkey
Telegrams: Interior Minister, Ankara, Turkey
Faxes: +90 312 417 2390
Salutation: Dear Minister

3. General Director of Police:

Mr Necati Bilican
Emniyet Genel Müdürlü_ü
Bakanl_klar
Ankara, Turkey
Telegrams: Emniyet Genel Muduru, Bakanliklar, Ankara, Turkey
Salutation: Dear Sir

4.State Minister with responsibility for Human Rights:

Mr Hikmet Sami Türk
Office of the Prime Minister
Ba_bakanl_k
06573 Ankara, Turkey
Faxes: +90 312 417 0476
Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

President of Parliamentary Human Rights Commission:

Mr Demir Berbero_lu
Insan Haklar_ Inceleme Komisyonu Ba_kani
TBMM
Ankara, Turkey
Fax: +90 312 420 5394

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 25 August 1997.