

PUBLIC

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To: Health professionals
From: Medical office / East Aegean team
Date: 10 September 2001

MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION

**Harassment of Human Rights Foundation, Diyarbakir
Turkey**

Key wordsharassment / human rights defenders / doctors

Amnesty International's concerns

The Diyarbakir Representation of the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (HRFT), Turkey's most important NGO working for the treatment and rehabilitation of torture victims, was raided by the police on Friday 7 September at 15:00 hrs. All patient related documents and the details of doctors who support them were confiscated. There is a risk that both the torture victims and their doctors will be exposed to harassment, arrests and further torture.

When representatives of Diyarbakir HRFT reminded them that they could not conduct any search without having a search warrant, the police called the Diyarbakir Public Prosecutor's Office. At 17:00hrs they had obtained a search warrant in which the treatment of torture victims was referred to as "illegal activities". The prosecutor ordered the confiscation of all related documents. The police seized all files and documents together with the computers. Among the documents were patient files which are confidential between patient and medical doctor in accordance with long-standing medical ethics. The Foundation has paid utmost attention to not making any of this confidential information public. The police also confiscated some journals that have been banned. However, it is not illegal in Turkey to keep one copy of such documents. By 20:00hrs the police left the Diyarbakir office of the Foundation. One of the doctors, Dr. Emin Yuksel was taken to the police in order to give a statement.

The HRFT has since its foundation in 1990 been carrying out a Project for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Survivors. The Foundation has five treatment and rehabilitation centres. In the year 2000 more than 1000 people applied to the centres. The representation in Diyarbakir was founded in 1998. It plays a crucial role in the treatment and rehabilitation of torture victims in the southeast of Turkey, which is mainly inhabited by Kurds and where torture and ill-treatment is especially widespread. In 1998 the HRFT was awarded the European Human Rights Prize of the Council of Europe for "outstanding contribution to the protection of human rights in Turkey" and the struggle for abolition of torture.

Recommendations

Please write letters in English, Turkish or your own language to the authorities below. Please use professionally-headed paper if you use this in your profession:

- expressing grave concern at the confiscation of patient related documents from the HRFT Diyarbakir office, which is a violation of the UN Human Rights Defenders Resolution of 9 December 1998 and long-standing medical ethics;

- urging the authorities to immediately return any documents which contain information on torture victims and doctors who examined or treated them;
- urging the authorities to refrain from any reprisal, harassment, arrests and torture of people mentioned in the confiscated documents; under Article 13 of the UN Convention against Torture, to which Turkey is a state party, Turkey is obliged to protect complainants and witnesses of torture against ill-treatment or intimidation as a consequence of their complaints or any evidence given;
- asking the authorities to issue a public statement recognizing the vital role of non-governmental organizations such as the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey as outlined in the UN Human Rights Defenders Resolution.

If you receive no reply from the government or other recipients within two months of dispatch of your letter, please send a follow up letter seeking a response, referring to your previous letter(s). Please do not be discouraged by the possible lack of replies to your letters. They are noticed. Please check with the medical team if you are sending appeals after 29 October 2001, and send copies of any replies you do receive to the International Secretariat (att: medical team).

Addresses

Please write appeals to:

Minister of the Interior
Mr Rustu Kazim Yucelen
Ministry of Interior
Iciseri Bakanligi
06644 Ankara, Turkey
Telegrams: Interior Minister, Ankara, Turkey
Fax: +90 312 418 17 95
Salutation: Dear Minister

Minister of Justice
Prof Hikmet Sami Türk
Ministry of Justice
Adalet Bakanligi
06659 Ankara, Turkey
Telegrams: Justice Minister, Ankara, Turkey
Faxes: + 90 312 417 3954 / 418 5667
Salutation: Dear Minister

Diyarbakir Police Headquarters
Mr Atilla Cinar
Diyarbakir Emniyet Müdürü
Diyarbakir Emniyet Müdürlüğü
Diyarbakir, Turkey
Telegrams: Emniyet Müdürü, Diyarbakir, Turkey
Salutation: Dear Chief of Police

Copies

Please send copies of your letter to diplomatic representatives of Turkey accredited to your country.

Please note that we are *not* asking for copies to the Turkish Human Rights Foundation and the Turkish Medical Association because both organisations are aware of our action and our support.