

TURKEYBurhan Akta_ , Kurd aged 25, married with one child

The whereabouts of Burhan Akta_ , reportedly detained by police on 22 October 1997 in Erzurum, eastern Turkey, are unknown. Amnesty International is gravely concerned for his safety.

Burhan Akta_ was sitting with his mother outside her house in Erzurum, when a white Renault car drove up. Three men, who the mother believes were police officers, forced Burhan Akta_ into the car and drove off. Burhan Akta_'s mother and sister immediately went to the police station to find out where he had been taken, but the police denied holding him. Upon later inquiries at Erzurum Police Headquarters the police chief replied that no such person was being held.

In 1994 Burhan Akta_ had worked for some time as an unpaid reporter for the Kurdish-owned newspaper *Özgür Gündem* (Free Agenda). He had been detained twice previously in Erzurum in 1997. On the first occasion he was reportedly tortured for three days and on the second occasion for six days, after which he was found dumped in a street in a very poor state. He suffered a back injury as a result of the treatment in custody. On at least one of these occasions his detention is thought to have been officially registered.

Earlier in 1997 Burhan Akta_ visited Istanbul where he spoke with a lawyer. He told the lawyer that he was under intense pressure in Erzurum and was being followed.

People suspected of offences under the Anti-Terror Law can now be held in police custody without access to family, friends or legal counsel for up to four days.

This period may be increased to 10 days in the six provinces currently under State of Emergency and to seven days in the rest of Turkey, during which detainees would have to be granted access to a lawyer. Erzurum is not under a state of emergency.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Sixteen journalists covering human rights issues in southeast Turkey have been killed, died in custody or "disappeared" at the hands of the security forces since 1992. Most of those killed worked for the Kurdish-owned newspapers *Yeni Ülke*, *Özgür Gündem*, *Özgür Ülke*, and *Yeni Politika*. Each of these newspapers has been forced to close. These newspapers strongly supported Kurdish nationalism, and the security forces clearly considered them "legal organs of the PKK" (Kurdish Workers' Party). Eight correspondents and 11 distributors and vendors of these newspapers have been murdered in circumstances suggesting state responsibility, and two staff journalists "disappeared". Scores of editors and other staff have been detained and tortured. Many of them are still in prison.

Procedures laid down in the Turkish Criminal Procedure Code for the prompt and proper registration of detainees, and for notification to their families, are often ignored. Lack of prompt registration and notification is extremely distressing for the families of detainees and creates conditions in which "disappearances" and torture can more easily occur.

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

- expressing grave concern for the safety of Burhan Akta_, since 22 October 1997 held in unacknowledged detention in Erzurum;
- urging that immediate steps be taken to establish his whereabouts and state of health, and to inform his family and lawyer without delay;
- asking to be informed of the results of the investigation and of any charges brought against Burhan Akta_.

APPEALS TO:

1. Chief Prosecutor at Erzurum State Security Court

DGM Ba_savc_s_
Devlet Güvenlik Mahkemesi
Erzurum, Turkey

Telegrams: DGM Bassavcısı, Erzurum, Turkey

Salutation: Dear Sir

3. Erzurum Chief of Police

Mr Ismail Uzuno_lu
Erzurum Emniyet Müdürlü_ü
Erzurum, Turkey

Telegrams: Emniyet Muduru, Erzurum, Turkey

Salutation: Dear Sir

3. Minister of the Interior:

Mr Murat Ba_eskio_lu
_çisleri Bakanl____
Ankara, Turkey

Telegrams: Interior Minister, Ankara, Turkey

Faxes: +90 312 418 1795

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

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

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 10 December 1997.