

Date: 6 June 1996

MEDICAL CONCERN
Ferzinde and _irin ABI
TURKEY

Ferzinde and _irin Abi are a married Kurdish couple with seven children. In May 1996 they were formally arrested and committed to prison in Van, a city near the border with Iran, after 15 days in police custody during which time they were allegedly subjected to very serious torture. Their youngest child - now only two months old - is in prison with its mother. Ferzinde Abi, who runs a coffee-house in Van, was a board member of the Hakkari branch of the now defunct Democracy Party (DEP)¹. Both were detained on 26 April 1996 - his wife _irin at the family home in the presence of their children and Ferzinde in the neighbourhood.

When they appeared in court to be charged, one of Ferzinde Abi's arms is reported to have been bandaged and _irin Abi had difficulties in walking, apparently as a result of torture. While in police custody Ferzinde Abi is reported to have been referred to hospital on three occasions. After later being taken to Van State Hospital from prison, he alleged that his injuries were neither noted nor attended to because police had threatened doctors not to document torture-related injuries. He is reported to have since been taken for further medical examination, but is still said not to be receiving appropriate medical treatment, in particular for his arms. He suffered fractures to one of his arms and to a leg as a result of blows from rifle butts and he has lost the use of his arms after he was hung from them during torture. The torture to which he is reported to have been subjected included electric shocks, threats that he would be killed, hanging by the arms with his wrists tied behind his back and suspension by the arms in a crucifix position. He also had a plastic bag forced over his head and secured at his neck which was then filled with water to above nose level. This was done while he was hanging from the arms.

_irin Abi is also alleged to have been subjected to electric shocks and hanging by the arms, with her wrists tied behind her back, and she had tufts of her hair pulled out. In addition, she was stripped naked and sexually abused by police in front of her husband. Both were forced to witness each other's torture. A relative said of them, "Both were so severely tortured that they hardly looked alive when I visited them in prison. They had pale dead-looking faces in which only the eyes seemed still alive". _irin Abi appears to have recovered to some extent since her torture.

In the 10 provinces under State of Emergency in the east and southeast - such as Van province - anyone suspected of offences under the Anti-Terror Law can be held in police custody for up to 30 days without access to family, friends or legal counsel. Detainees are then brought first before the prosecutor and, subsequently, a judge who determines whether charges are to be

¹DEP - legal Kurdish political party in Turkey until it was banned by the Constitutional Court in June 1994 and its parliamentary deputies were put on trial. Many of its officials and members have been assassinated.

brought. At present it is not known what charges have been brought against either Ferzinde or _irin Abi.

Ferzinde Abi has registered a complaint of torture with the Van Chief Prosecutor. The following are extracts from a testimony which he issued from prison:

“.... We were held for 15 days at the anti-terror branch and during that time we were exposed to terrible torture - torture which crushed a person’s honour underfoot. During the torture, the thing they were pressing me to do was either to become an agent and to work with them, or to accept and sign the statements they had written, these statements consisting of a scenario written against me.

“When I did not agree to any of this, they brought my wife _irin in front of me and stripped her completely naked; they put her on the ‘Palestinian hanger’ several times. In front of my very eyes they molested her sexually and did disgusting things which are hard to put into writing. Their sole aim in this was to put me under mental pressure to make me sign descriptions of scenarios which had nothing to do with me.

“The more I tried to defend myself against these accusations, the more the torture was varied and extended until it reached the stage of causing profound damage...

“As a result of this savage torture, there was profound damage to my entire body. Both my arms were paralysed and I have lost their use.

“In spite of the fact that I explained this situation to the Prosecutor and, although they could see our state, no legal action was taken and they arrested my wife and myself and sent us to prison. Given the condition I was in, I was transferred from the prison to Van State Hospital, but doctors at the Orthopaedics & Neurology department of the hospital where I was sent made no intervention at all and said that the police had threatened them to prevent them from treating me or giving me a medical report.

“At the moment I am in Van prison without any medical attention at all. It is as if I am being left for dead. All my needs are met by other prisoners held with me....”

EXTERNAL

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To: Medical professionals

From: Medical Office / Europe Regional Program

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MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION

Ferzinde and _irin ABI
TURKEY

Keywords

Theme: Torture

Summary

Please see the attached testimony of the torture of a Kurdish couple during their detention in police custody in Van in the east of Turkey in April/May 1996.

Recommended Actions

1) Letters are requested from medical professionals to the addresses below:

expressing deep concern at the alleged torture of Ferzinde and _irin Abi during their interrogation at Van police headquarters, noting that Ferzinde Abi required referral to hospital on a number of occasions as a result

all noting that he is still reported to be in need of medical care and urging that he receive the medical care he requires

expressing further concern that _irin Abi is reported to have been sexually molested by police officers

noting that Ferzinde Abi brought a complaint of torture and urging that this complaint is pursued and that instructions are issued to the police in Van to desist from torture

seeking investigation of allegations that pressure was put on doctors at Van State Hospital not to treat Ferzinde Abi or document his injuries

Addresses

Van Closed Prison Infirmary Doctor:
Van Kapalı Cezzaevi Revir Doktoru
Van Kapalı Cezzaevi
Van, Turkey
Telograms: Kapalı Cezzaevi Doktoru, Van, Turkey
Salutation: Dear Sir

Van Chief Prosecutor:
Cumhuriyet Başsavcısı
Van Savcısı [Van Prosecutor's
Van, Turkey Office]
Telograms: Cumhuriyet Savcısı, Van, Turkey
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor

Interior Minister:
Mr Ülkü Güneş
Ministry of Interior
_çişleri Bakanlığı
06644 Ankara, Turkey
Telograms: Interior Minister, Ankara, Turkey
Fax: +90 312 418 1795
Salutation: Dear Minister

Copies to:

Turkish Medical Association:
Türk Tabipleri Birliği
Mithatpaşa Cad. 62/18
06420 Yenimahalle-Ankara
Turkey

and to Turkish diplomatic representatives in your own country

_irin FBI

Ferzinde FBI

(Photographs of their identity papers)