

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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"Disappearance"

21 September 1994

TURKEY

Mehmet Gürkan (generally known as Mustafa Gürkan)

Mehmet Gürkan, a Kurd, has not been seen since 18 August 1994 when he was detained by security forces in the village of Akçayurt (Diyarbakır province), of which he is *muhtar* (headman). There are fears that he has been targeted because of statements he made to the press in which he alleged that he had been tortured while held in a containment area set up after the security forces had burned out his village.

On 7 July, following a clash between PKK (Kurdish Workers' Party) guerrillas and security forces, Akçayurt (Kurdish name: Derno) was forcibly evacuated by security forces, and most of its population, and the inhabitants of several neighbouring villages, were detained in a containment area set up adjacent to the nearby Topçular gendarmerie post. The villagers were released a week later, and most, including Mehmet Gürkan and his family, fled to Adana.

On 13 July, while still held at Topçular gendarmerie post, Mehmet Gürkan made a statement to ATV television reporters that the PKK had burnt his village.

However, in Adana after his release, he held press conferences retracting this statement, which he claimed had been made under threat of torture. He stated that Akçayurt had in fact been burned out by the security forces.

According to a report in the *Turkish Daily News* of 3 August, Mehmet Gürkan said: *"I supported the government. But they came to my village and burned it down. They took me to the Topçular Gendarmerie station and tortured me. My ribs were broken. They collected the people outside the village and gave them nothing for four days. A total of 430 people of my village have now gone to Adana, Diyarbakır and nearby villages. We have nothing to eat. They also burned all of our crops. I came to Ankara to ask help from the Government"*.

On 18 August Mehmet Gürkan returned to Akçayurt to collect some remaining pieces of furniture from his home. According to eyewitnesses, he was detained by security forces in the village and taken away by helicopter. His wife, Ayşe Gürkan, applied for confirmation of his detention to the Diyarbakır State Security Court, but they denied any knowledge of him. She has also applied to gendarmerie post at Topçular village near Akçayurt, who admitted holding Mehmet Gürkan, but said that they had already released him.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

An estimated 2,000 Kurdish villagers, including women and children, were herded into the containment area at Topçular gendarmerie post near Damlatepe, in Diyarbakır province, and held for a week in cruel and inhuman conditions. Many were reported to have been severely tortured there by members of the Special Team (heavily armed security force members trained for close combat with guerrillas and acting under the authority of the Interior Ministry). While some were permitted to shelter in a schoolhouse and health centre, others were forced to lie in the fierce sun. Much of the time they were left hungry and thirsty.

Mehmet Çeliksöz (*muhtar* of Yayladere village), Aziz Bıçakçı, Kasım Çeliksöz, Heybet Çeliksöz, Yusuf Çeliksöz and three other men were beaten unconscious,

and filmed with weapons arranged around them. The film was shown on TRT (Turkish Radio and Television) with a commentary indicating that they were "eight terrorists killed by security forces". All eight villagers are still alive, and four are now sheltering in Adana. Aziz B\_çakç\_'s teeth were broken in the beating.

The conflict in southeast Turkey between government forces and guerrillas of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) has claimed more than 12,000 lives since it began in August 1984. A state of emergency remains in force in 10 provinces in the southeast where police and gendarmerie have the right to hold political suspects incommunicado for up to one month.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Mehmet Gürkan, who was taken into custody on 18 August 1994 at Akçayurt village, Diyarbak\_r province;
- urging that immediate steps be taken to establish his whereabouts;
- asking to be informed of the results of the investigation.

#### **APPEALS TO**

##### 1) Commander in Chief of the Gendarmerie

Orgeneral Ayd\_n\_lter  
Kuvvetleri Komutanl\_\_\_\_  
Bakanl\_klar  
06100 Ankara, Turkey

**Telegrams: Kuvvetleri Komutanligi, Ankara, Turkey**

**Faxes: +90 312 418 0476**

**Salutation: Dear General**

##### 2) Minister of the Interior:

Mr Nahit Mente\_e  
\_çi\_leri Bakanl\_\_\_\_  
Ankara, Turkey

**Telegrams: Interior Minister, Ankara, Turkey**

**Faxes: +90 312 428 4346**

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

#### **COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

State Minister with responsibility for Human Rights  
Mr Azimet Köylüo\_lu  
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 2 November 1994.