

UA 299/91

Death Threats

5 September 1991

TURKEY: Zübeyir Aydar, lawyer
 Evin Aydar (female), journalist

Recent events in the southeast and a number of incidents in Siirt in particular have given rise to concern for the safety of Zübeyir and Evin Aydar, human rights activists living in Siirt. Zübeyir Aydar, a lawyer, is Deputy President of the Turkish Human Rights Association and a member of the General Executive Committee of the People's Labour Party (HEP). HEP is generally perceived as representing Kurdish interests. Evin Aydar, his wife, is a journalist and President of the Human Rights Association (HRA) branch in Siirt. They have two small children.

Zübeyir Aydar began to receive death threats after researching and publicizing, early in 1989, the existence of the so-called "Butcher's River" near Siirt, allegedly a dumping ground for victims of extrajudicial executions. Local military commanders are said to have threatened that his body, too, would be found in the "Butcher's River". Further death threats followed his publicizing of the deaths of three detainees who allegedly died under torture in F_nd_k, Siirt province.

Zübeyir Aydar was exiled to Malatya in September 1989 under the emergency legislation which is currently in force in 10 provinces in the southeast, including Siirt. This caused economic problems for his family and difficulties for clients he represented at the time. When he was allowed to return, the identity of those welcoming him back was recorded on film. In July 1990, a second order for exile was issued, but later cancelled.

People visiting the office of the HRA in Siirt undergo identity checks by the police. On 15 May 1991, the police raided the office. During the raid a number of people including Zübeyir Aydar were beaten. In the same month, a foreign visitor to the HRA office carrying out research in the region was stopped while leaving the area and had all her photographs and notes confiscated by the security forces.

In May 1991, Abdülkerim Celek of Ta_l_ village near _irvan was killed by the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK). His relatives were visited by the regimental commander of the provincial gendarmerie who allegedly told them: "The PKK killed your man. Their man is Zübeyir Aydar - go and kill him. I'll help in whatever way I can."

In July 1991, after the assassination of Vedat Ayd_n, President of HEP in Diyarbak_r, the police allegedly told a detainee in Siirt: "We killed Vedat Ayd_n - within a month we'll have killed Zübeyir Aydar."

In August 1991, the Aydar family received word that five village guards from Ta_l_ village had been told by members of the political police to kill Zübeyir Aydar and that they would be protected if they carried out the murder. On 7 August 1991, the five village guards were seen standing in a small park opposite Zübeyir Aydar's office in Siirt. The police were in position at the end of the road checking the identity of anyone going into the street. The lawyer's office was very crowded at the time and it is thought that this prevented

an attack. On 22 August 1991, four of the village guards again appeared in Siirt and were seen going to the Police Headquarters. They later appeared outside the lawyer's office, where the police inquired where the lawyer was - but he was out of town that day. On the evening of 23 August 1991, the window of the office, empty at the time, was smashed. On 27 August 1991, at 9.00am, plainclothes police officers in a vehicle with the registration number 56 AT 321 came to Zübeyir Aydar's office where only the office boy, Lokman Gündüz, aged 13, was present. They allegedly held him by the throat and asked him where Zübeyir and Evin Aydar were. When Evin Aydar learned of this, she informed the authorities, but

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received no response. On 28 and 29 August 1991, the village guards were again seen opposite the lawyer's office.

Zübeyir Aydar and his wife Evin, who is also at risk due to her work as an investigative journalist and her position in the HRA, continue to receive constant threats by telephone and letter.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Turkish Human Rights Association, founded in 1986, faced considerable pressure by the authorities from the start. Several of its officials have been detained and imprisoned. Leading members have been tried on a variety of charges, most trials eventually ending in acquittal. Several branches have been closed, some indefinitely. Members of the HRA have received death threats by mail and telephone.

At 2.10am on 18 June 1991, an explosive device detonated in the car of the lawyer Mustafa Özer, a former board member of the HRA in Diyarbak_r, which was parked outside his home. The powerful explosion completely destroyed the car.

At midnight on 25 June 1991, an explosion destroyed the office of the HRA in Diyarbak_r, injuring a neighbour.

On the morning of 2 July 1991, a bomb exploded in Batman in the car of Siddik Tan shortly after he had parked it outside his shop. Siddik Tan, a board member of the Batman branch of the HRA, his 10-year old son and a friend were injured in the blast, which completely destroyed the car.

At midnight on 5 July 1991, Vedat Ayd_n, the President of HEP in Diyarbak_r and a member of the HRA, was taken from his home by several men, ostensibly police officers. His body bearing multiple bullet wounds and traces of torture was found on the morning of 8 July 1991 some 60 kilometres from Diyarbak_r near a busy motorway.

On 11 July 1991, Remzi_l, Diyarbak_r delegate for HEP, was stopped by two men who introduced themselves as police officers. They took him by car with a bag over his head to a building where he was interrogated about his political connections and beaten until he fainted. When he regained consciousness the following day, he found himself on a rubbish tip near his workplace. Afterwards he suffered fainting fits and on 27 July 1991 was taken unconscious to hospital where he died the same day of a brain haemorrhage.

In all these cases it is not known who carried out the attack.

Turkey has a Kurdish ethnic minority which is estimated to number some 10 million people. Any activity for a separate Kurdish political or cultural identity is punishable under Turkish law. The Kurdish population lives mainly in the southeastern provinces where guerrillas of the PKK have been fighting for an independent Kurdish state since 1984. Frequent allegations of torture and ill-treatment have been received from the region. In August 1990, the government derogated from Articles 5, 6, 8, 10, 11 and 13 of the European Convention on Human Rights, all of which contain important safeguards for human rights.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern at the death threats made against Zübeyir and Evin Aydar;
- urging that these death threats are impartially investigated so that those responsible may be brought to justice;
- calling for an investigation into allegations that members of the security forces have made proposals to several people that they kill Zübeyir Aydar;
- seeking guarantees for the couple's safety;
- appealing that all necessary steps be taken to prevent further attacks on members of the Human Rights Association and/or HEP.

APPEALS TO:

1.

Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz
Office of the Prime Minister
Ba_bakanl_k
06573 Ankara, Turkey

Telegrams: Prime Minister, Ankara, Turkey
Telexes: 44061/44062/44063 bbmt tr;
42099 basb tr; 42875 bbk tr
Faxes: + 90 41 17 04 76 PRIME MINISTER;
+90 42 30 88 96 (attn: Prime Minister)

2.

Siirt Chief of Police:
Mr Celalettin Cerrah
Siirt Emniyet Müdürü
Siirt, Turkey

Telegrams: Siirt Emniyet Muduru, Siirt, Turkey
Faxes: + 90 844 12296

3.

Emergency Legislation Governor:
Mr Necati Çetinkaya
Ola_anüstü Hal Valisi
Diyarbak_r, Turkey

Telegrams: Olaganustu Hal Valisi, Diyarbakir, Turkey
Telexes: 72110 OHVT TR; 72090 JASY TR;
72084 DYVA TR "please forward to the Governor"
Faxes: + 90 831 26174

COPIES TO:

President of Parliamentary Human Rights Commission:
Mr Eyüp A_k
nsan Haklar Ara_t_rma Komisyonu Ba_kan_
TBMM

Ankara, Turkey

Faxes: + 90 4 11 91 664; + 90 4 42 06 941

and to diplomatic representatives of Turkey in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 17 October 1991.