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Fear of Torture

13 December 1993

TURKEY Staff of the newspaper *Özgür Gündem* (Free Agenda) in:

Istanbul: Gürbetelli Ersöz (f), editor-in-chief; Fahri Ferda Çetin, editor; Gülten K__anak (f), news editor; journalists: Müslüm Yücel, Mahmut Do_an, Ferhat Tugan, Yurdusev Özsökmenler, and Nursel Polat (f); Do_an Güzel, cartoonist; two administrators: Ali R_za Halis and Mehmet Balamir; Düzgün Deniz, archive manager; Faysal Da_l_, research desk manager; Mucah_r Kuas, accountant; Hüseyin Solgun; Mehtap Gürbüz, sub-editor; Ali Seyhan, cook; _emsettin Ecevit, driver

Diyarbak_r: Hasan Özgün, Diyarbak_r representative; journalists: M. S_raç Koç, Necmiye Aslan (f), Mehmet _ah Y_ld_z, Nuray Tekda_ (f), and Bitan Onen;

Izmir: Sezai Karakoç, Izmir representative; R_za Z_ngal, news editor; four journalists: Serdar Çayç_o_lu, Nam_k Alkan, Emin Ünay and Çiller Ye_il; Leyla Akgül (f), secretary; and 29 others;

Adana: Hac_ Çetinkaya, Adana representative; four journalists: Sükrü Kaplan, Ihsan Kurt, Aslan Saraç, and Beyhan Günyeli.

Elaz__: Cengiz Ta_, Elaz__ representative; journalists: Menaf Avc_ and Yalç_n Sevinc, plus two others

Batman: Salih Dinç Mardin: Rezzan Güne_ (f)

Van: At least five people Antep: Two people

Amnesty International fears that the above named people are being interrogated under torture. They were detained during a series of nationwide police operations against the pro-Kurdish newspaper *Özgür Gündem*.

More than 150 people working for the newspaper were detained during the operations which began in Diyarbak_r on 9 December and culminated in a raid on the newspaper's central office in Istanbul on 10 December, Human Rights Day, in which some 110 people were detained and material, including archives and computer disks, seized. That same morning the paper had published on its front page excerpts from the UN Declaration of Human Rights. Reportedly some 200 police officers raided the main office, and for 24 hours searched the premises and computer, detaining all those present and taking them to Istanbul Police Headquarters. By the evening of 11 December, all but 18 had been released.

According to a statement by the prosecutor's office at Istanbul State Security

Court, guns, bullets, gas masks and some documents relating to the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK), which is engaged in armed conflict with the government, were found during the operation. One of the newspaper's lawyers later confirmed that two pistols, 25 gas masks and two sleeping bags had been found in the building. He stated that Ali R_za Halis accepted ownership of the pistols and that the gas masks were to be sent to the paper's Diyarbak_r office which, being below ground level, feared the possibility of sabotage.

On Saturday, 11 December, the newspaper's offices in Izmir, Adana, Elaz__, Batman, Mardin, Antep and Van were also raided and its correspondents and staff detained. Nobody was working in the Mardin office when it was searched, but one member of its staff, Rezzan Güne_, was detained when the police raided her home. It is not known whether any of these detainees have been released. Those held in Diyarbak_r, Batman, Mardin and Van may be held for up to 30 days, under emergency legislation in force in these provinces.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Özgür Gündem is the only Kurdish-owned daily newspaper in Turkey. It began publication in May 1992 and is the only newspaper which has consistently reported human rights violations in the provinces under State of Emergency. The State Security Court in Istanbul has been seeking to close the paper permanently on charges of separatist propaganda and praising the outlawed Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK). In the 18 months of its existence, nine of the newspaper's journalists and 11 people distributing and selling the newspaper have been murdered under unclarified circumstances. Scores of its correspondents and editors have been detained and tortured.

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

- expressing grave concern about the police operation all over Turkey against the newspaper Özgür Gündem;
- seeking assurances that those of its correspondents and staff still held in detention are not subjected to torture or any other form of ill-treatment;
- requesting to be informed of any charges brought against them and the evidence supporting the charges.

APPEALS TO

1) Prime Minister:

Mrs Tansu Çiller

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: +90 312 417 04 76 PRIME MINISTER

+90 312 230 88 96 (attn: Prime Minister)

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

2) Minister of the Interior:

Mr Nahit Mente_e

İçisleri Bakanl____

Ankara, Turkey

Telegrams: Interior Minister, Ankara, Turkey

Faxes: +90 312 428 4346

Salutation: Dear Minister

3) Minister of Justice:

Mr Seyfi Oktay

Adalet Bakanl____

06659 Ankara, Turkey

Telegrams: Justice Minister, Ankara, Turkey

Faxes: +90 312 425 4066

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO: 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 8 January 1994.