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Fear of Torture

24 October 1990

TURKEY: Ahmet Timurta_, President of Petrol-__ (trade union)
Mehmet Kara, employee of Petrol-__

Amnesty International has received reports that Ahmet Timurta_, the President of Petrol-__, and Mehmet Kara, an employee of Petrol-__, were detained in Batman in the morning of 23 October 1990 and are currently being held incommunicado at Batman Police Headquarters. Their lawyer, who requested to see his clients in police custody, was reportedly refused access, even though he had power of attorney.

According to Amnesty International's information, Ahmet Timurta_ has been detained about eight times since September 1980 and has been interrogated under torture each time, the last time being in December 1988/January 1989, when he was held for 27 days at Batman Police Headquarters and subjected to severe torture. On that occasion Mehmet Kara was also arrested. (see UA 10/89, EUR 44/05/89, 13 January 1989, and follow-ups EUR 44/07/89, 25 January, and EUR 44/12/89, 3 March).

Large scale arrests have been carried out in Batman and neighbouring provinces since operations by the security forces began there in the second half of September 1990. No specific information is available as to the reasons for the arrests. However, the situation in the region bordering Iraq is reported to be extremely tense and in many cases people detained have been suspected of aiding the Kurdish guerrillas fighting in the area.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Turkey has a Kurdish ethnic minority which is not officially recognized by the authorities, but is estimated to number some 10 million people. The Kurdish population lives mainly in southeastern Turkey. Frequent allegations of torture and ill-treatment have been received from the region and the number of torture allegations increased substantially after the 1980 military coup.

Since August 1984, when Kurdish guerrillas - members of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) - started armed attacks, an alarming number of reports of ill-treatment of detainees by the security forces have come from the eastern and southeastern provinces, where more than 2000 lives so far have been lost in the continuing fighting.

Turkey ratified the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture on 25 February 1988 and the UN Convention Against Torture on 2 August 1988. However, all information available to Amnesty International indicates that torture is still widespread and systematic in Turkey. Allegations of torture have continued since the transfer of power to a civilian government in 1983.

Most allegations relate to ill-treatment of detainees in police custody during their initial interrogation when they are usually denied access to relatives or a lawyer. Under current legislation the maximum detention period before being formally charged or released is 24 hours; in cases involving three or more suspects or due to the 'nature of the crime' it may be extended to 15 days. This period may be extended to 30 days in areas under emergency legislation or martial law. Emergency legislation is currently in force in ten provinces, including Batman.

In May 1990 the Turkish government issued Decrees 424 and 425, further extending the already extraordinary powers of the Emergency Legislation Governor, and subsequently, in August 1990, the government derogated from Articles 5, 6, 8, 10, 11 and 13 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

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

- urging that Ahmet Timurta_ and Mehmet Kara are given prompt access to their families and lawyer and that they are not ill-treated while in detention;
- requesting to be informed of any charges against them.

APPEALS TO:

Prime Minister Y_ld_r_m Akbulut
Office of the Prime Minister
Ba_bakanl_k
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

Batman Emniyet Müdürü
Batman Chief of Police
Batman, Turkey

Telegrams: Emniyet Muduru, Batman, Turkey

Emergency Legislation Governor:

Hayri Kozakç_o_lu
Ola_anüstü Hal Val_s_
Diyarbak_r, Turkey

Telegrams: Olaganustu Valisi, Diyarbakir, Turkey
Faxes: 90 831 26 471 Olaganustu Hal Valisi

COPIES TO:

- The Editor, Milliyet, Nuruosmaniye Cad. 65, Ca_alo_lu-_stanbul, Turkey
- and to diplomatic representatives of Turkey in your country.

Please organize appeals from trade unionists.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 5 December 1990.