

EXTERNAL

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Prisoner of conscience

18 October 1996

TURKEY _anar Yurdatapan, musician, human rights activist

_anar Yurdatapan, spokesperson for the "Together for Peace" initiative (BIBA - Bar__ İçin Biraraya) and a leading composer and performer of contemporary music, was detained in Istanbul on 15 October 1996. He is currently held in Ankara Central Closed Prison awaiting trial.

The police authorities denied holding _anar Yurdatapan for eight hours. He was taken to Ankara Police Headquarters where he was reportedly interrogated while blindfolded. On 17 October he was formally arrested by Ankara State Security Court under Article 169 of the Turkish Penal Code on an unsubstantiated charge of "aiding members of an armed organization" - in this case the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK).

The allegations against him are that he participated in the preparation of a television programme prepared by the Kurdish satellite television station MED-TV by composing incidental music, that he participated in a discussion programme on MED-TV, and that he put his name to a newspaper notice protesting an attempt to assassinate Abdullah Öcalan, leader of the PKK. _anar Yurdatapan has always made it clear that although he is working to promote dialogue in the context of the violence in the southeast, he in no way supports the aims and methods of the PKK.

Amnesty International believes the sole reason for _anar Yurdatapan's imprisonment is his tireless and imaginative work on behalf of freedom of expression and peace, and that he is a prisoner of conscience held in breach of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. As such, he should be immediately and unconditionally released.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

_anar Yurdatapan was also the prime mover of the "Freedom of Thought" initiative, a group of 200 intellectuals, academics, writers and artists. The tactic this group adopted in order to challenge the continued imprisonment of people for their non-violent opinions was to republish under their own name any text subject to prosecution in the State Security Courts. This tactic was consciously based on the Voltairean principle of defending the right of all to express their ideas even if one strongly disagree with those ideas. The large-scale trials of notable Turkish literary figures which have followed are deservedly proving an embarrassment to prosecutors, judges and the legislation.

_anar Yurdatapan also organized an investigative delegation to Güçlükonak, the scene of a massacre of 11 men in January 1996. At first this massacre was publicised as having been carried out by the PKK, in breach of their own ceasefire (the European Parliament had recently called upon the Turkish Government to respond positively to the ceasefire). Shortly afterwards, doubts about the official story began to emerge, chiefly from the families of the victims of the massacre. The delegation led by _anar Yurdatapan was drawn from a wide spectrum of international, professional and human rights organizations. Its investigations left little doubt that government security forces carried out the killings.

_anar Yurdatapan was a speaker at Amnesty International's Austrian Section on 1 October 1996, on the occasion of a launch of a worldwide campaign to secure

progress in human rights in Turkey. He was to give a public talk at the organization's Norwegian Section on 26 October.

_anar Yurdatapan lived in exile in Germany from the late 1970s until 1991. He was deprived of Turkish citizenship because of his strong public criticism of the generals who seized power in 1980. His Turkish citizenship was recently restored by a decision of the Council of Ministers, and he now has both German and Turkish citizenship.

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

- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of _anar Yurdatapan who is being held as a prisoner of conscience in breach of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights;
- expressing regret that a Turkish citizen so committed to the promotion of peace and human rights should be imprisoned on such patently baseless and offensive charges.

APPEALS TO:

1. Prime Minister:

Mr Necmettin Erbakan
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

Faxes: +90 312 417 0476

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

2. State Minister with responsibility for Human Rights:

Mr Lütfü Esengül
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

Faxes: +90 312 417 0476

Salutation: Dear Minister

3. Chief Prosecutor at Ankara State Security Court:

Mr Nuh Mete Yüksel
Ankara DGM Ba_savc_s_
Ankara DGM Savc_l____
Ankara, Turkey

Telegrams: DGM Bassavciligi, Ankara, Turkey

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor

COPIES TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs
Mrs Tansu Çiller
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
D_i_leri Bakanl____
06100 Ankara, Turkey
Fax: +90 312 419 1547

and to diplomatic representatives of Turkey accredited to your country.

PLEASE ALSO SEND AS MANY CARDS AS POSSIBLE TO THE PRISONER:

_anar Yurdatapan

Ankara Merkez Kapali Cezaevi (Ankara Central Closed Prison)

K_s_m 5

Ankara

Turkey

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 10 December 1996.