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TURKEY: PATTERN OF "DISAPPEARANCES" CONTINUES

Amnesty International is gravely concerned by the striking increase in reports of "disappearances" in Turkey during 1993 and 1994, particularly in the country's southeastern provinces. In 1993 alone, there were at least 26 "disappearances" and in Istanbul the sixth "disappearance" in 12 months occurred in February.

In southeast Turkey, where a State of Emergency is in force, police and gendarmerie have the right to hold people completely incommunicado for a month if they are suspected of having committed a political offence. The detainee does not have the right to see a lawyer, family, friends or a doctor.

Procedures laid down in the Turkish Criminal Procedure Code for the prompt and proper registration of detainees and for notification of their families, are almost universally ignored in the southeastern provinces, and are increasingly disregarded in the cities in the south and west of Turkey. Lack of proper registration and notification is not only extremely distressing for families, but it fosters conditions in which "disappearances" can occur.

Amnesty International fears that unless decisive action is taken now, the practice of "disappearance", like that of extrajudicial execution, will become an established tool of intimidation and elimination.

On 16 March, Hüseyin Ta_kaya was taken from his home in Siverek by a First Lieutenant of the gendarmerie and the head of the local village guard militia accompanied by some 20 village guards. As he was being led away, Hüseyin Ta_kaya is said to have pleaded: "Don't let them take me away, they will kill me". His cousin Züheyra Ç_nar was allegedly beaten and had her arm broken by the village guards when she tried to prevent them from taking him away. When his family tried to establish his whereabouts, the prosecutor's office and the Gendarmerie Command in Siverek denied that he was being held in custody, even though his family had witnessed his detention. Hüseyin Ta_kaya's family now fear he has been killed.

According to a press report, Cüneyt Ayd_nlar "disappeared" after being detained on 20 February 1994 by a team of the Anti-Terror police in Istanbul. Former fellow detainees, now remanded in Sa_malc_ lar Prison, Istanbul have issued a statement saying that on 2 March, Cüneyt Ayd_nlar was seen by eye-witnesses at the Anti-Terror Branch of Istanbul Police Headquarters. They saw him taken from his cell by six police officers, allegedly after severe torture and almost in a state of coma. He has not been seen since, although his fellow-detainees have since appeared in court. In their statement, the prisoners expressed concern for the life of Cüneyt Ayd_nlar.

Naz_m Babao_lu, a correspondent in the town of _anl_ urfa, for the Kurdish-owned newspaper Özgür Gündem, was reported to have "disappeared" on 12 March when he left for Siverek, a town in the province of _anl_ urfa. According to press reports he had received a telephone call from Murat Yo_umlu, a Siverek resident, urging him to collect some important information. Reports in Özgür Gündem state that Murat Yo_umlu was detained for four days at Siverek Police Headquarters and denied ever making the telephone call. It is feared that Naz_m Babao_lu may have been abducted like his colleague Ferhat Tepe, who was abducted in Bitlis on 28 July 1993 and whose body was found eight days later in a lake some 250 kilometres away.

Amnesty International is appealing to the Turkish authorities to set up, as a matter of urgency, an impartial and properly resourced commission to investigate the fate of the "disappeared" in Turkey. It has also urged that Turkey adhere to international human rights instruments and has recommended a number of measures which would safeguard the lives of detainees.

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