

AI Index: PRE 01/278/2013  
11 June 2013

## **Turkish Prime Minister's words will only exacerbate violence**

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Tuesday announced, in a televised speech, that he would show no more tolerance for protests that have shaken the country for nearly two weeks.

Andrew Gardner, Turkey researcher at Amnesty International who is currently in Istanbul, responded:

“The Turkish Prime Minister has sought to declare the recent wave of protest over by personal diktat - this is not how the freedom of assembly works. Prime Minister Erdogan now bears personal responsibility for the violence that immediately followed his words. Peaceful protest must be respected and the international community must urge him to change tack to prevent further unnecessary bloodshed.”

Following the Prime Minister's speech, Amnesty International observers reported at least 30 tear gas canisters thrown into Gezi Park on Tuesday evening, despite the Istanbul Governor's pledge earlier in the day to halt the police intervention there.

Activists have now been protesting for nearly two weeks against the construction of a shopping centre in Gezi Park adjacent to Istanbul's Taksim Square, one of the last green spaces in the city.

Since protests began in Istanbul and across Turkey around two weeks ago, thousands of peaceful protesters have been reported injured as a result of police interventions.

Up to three people have reportedly died in the course of the protests: one as a result of the excessive use of force and two, including one police officer, following accidents.

The Turkish authorities have, so far, failed to investigate any of the reports of abuse and no one has been brought to justice.