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Turkey must investigate civilian killings

Amnesty International calls on the Turkish authorities to investigate immediately the death of at least 35 civilians in a military airstrike near the Iraqi border in south-eastern Turkey on the night of 28 December 2011. No military targets were reported to have been hit in the attack.

“The circumstances of the military operation that caused the death of so many civilians, some of whom were children, must be urgently investigated in a full, independent and transparent manner,” said Nicola Duckworth, Europe and Central Asia Programme Director.

“The government statements of regret are welcome but are woefully insufficient in the face of what appears to have been a complete failure to distinguish between a military target and civilians.”

Early reports indicated that drones operating in the area had alerted the Turkish airforce to the movement of a large group of people across the Iraqi border, believed to have been members of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

As a result, some 35 people were killed near the Uludere village in the city of Sirnak. At least 18 of those killed were children, the youngest was said to have been 12 years old. Twenty-nine of them are believed to belong to the same family.

“The Turkish authorities must take measures to prevent further such attacks and to provide compensation for the families of those killed,” said Nicola Duckworth.