

AI Index: PRE 01/016/2008
18 January 2008

Turkey: Reveal the full circumstances surrounding Hrant Dink's murder

On the eve of the first anniversary of the killing of the Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, Amnesty International calls on the Turkish authorities to condemn all forms of intolerance and to bring all those involved in the killing to justice in accordance with international fair trial standards.

"The scope of the investigation must be widened to examine the full circumstances of the killing, including the role of law enforcement officials in failing to act on warnings that he was being targeted for assassination," said Andrew Gardner, Amnesty International's researcher on Turkey.

Hrant Dink had reported threats to his life to the Public Prosecutor in *ÅžiÅŸli*. According to the indictment in the murder trial, one of the defendants also acted as a police informer and told the police of the plans to assassinate Hrant Dink in the months before the murder took place. Nevertheless, steps were not taken to ensure his protection. Subsequently two gendarmerie officers were charged with dereliction of duty; however, lawyers for the family have called for more law enforcement officers to be brought to justice.

The initial statement by the Istanbul Police Chief that the killing was the act of a gunman working alone and the photographs of military police with the alleged killer as if he was a "hero" illustrate an official reluctance to examine the full scope of the crime and contribute to the perception that sections of the law enforcement agencies may be biased.

Amnesty International considers that Hrant Dink was shot on 19 January 2007 because of his work as a journalist who championed freedom of expression and promoted the universality of human rights.

"Human rights activists have a right to the protection of the state, like any other citizen. The failure to prevent the murder of Hrant Dink and the subsequent flaws in the investigation must not be repeated," Andrew Gardner said.

"Hrant Dink's case is not an exception. Many in Turkey continue to be prosecuted for the peaceful expression of their non-violent opinions. This is due both to the existence of flawed legislation and the arbitrary implementation of the law by judges and prosecutors."

Hrant Dink was repeatedly prosecuted under Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code that criminalizes "denigrating Turkishness". Amnesty International has continually called for Article 301 to be abolished on the grounds that it poses a grave threat to freedom of expression, as it is worded in such broad and vague terms. Amnesty International is concerned that the number of cases opened under this article appears to have increased in 2007. The organization notes that in the past year, violations of human rights increased and measures to combat them remained insufficient.

"The continuing suppression of freedom of expression in Turkey has created an atmosphere of deadly intolerance culminating in the killing of Hrant Dink," said Andrew Gardner, Amnesty International's researcher on Turkey.

In a [memorandum](#) to the government sent earlier this week, the organization reminded it of its commitment, repeated after elections last year, to further legislative reform and advance guarantees of human rights and freedoms. Amnesty International believes that the current government must take action on a number of issues to achieve lasting, substantive improvements. These issues include torture and ill-treatment in detention and impunity for the perpetrators, fair trial concerns, obstacles being placed to undermine the work of human rights activists and freedom of expression.

"In addition to implementing current legal reforms, urgent legislative reform must be adopted. The authorities must seize the opportunity to advance the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms for all in the new constitution that is being drafted," said Andrew Gardner.

See: [Turkey: Memorandum to the Turkish Government](#) (AI Index: EUR 44/001/2008)

[Turkey: Article 301: How the law on "denigrating Turkishness" is an insult to free expression](#) (AI Index: EUR 44/003/2006)