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AI INDEX : EUR 44/01/96

**TURKEY: PRISONERS BEATEN TO DEATH LATEST VICTIMS OF OFFICIAL INDIFFERENCE**

Three more prisoners were apparently beaten to death by Turkish security forces invading an Istanbul prison yesterday, bringing the total number of prisoners killed in such incursions in the past 18 months to eight.

“The failure of the authorities properly to investigate the death and injury of so many prisoners in previous incidents is encouraging police and soldiers who are storming into prisons to think that they can attack prisoners with impunity,” Amnesty International said.

Orhan Özen, R\_za Bayba\_, and Abdulmecit Seçkin reportedly died of head injuries when an estimated 200 police and gendarmes entered the newly opened Ümraniye Special Type Prison following clashes between warders and prisoners protesting at visiting restrictions. In addition to those killed, 28 prisoners, six gendarmes and one warden were injured and taken to hospital. The condition of six of the prisoners is understood to be very serious.

In a letter addressed to Turkey’s Minister of Justice today, Amnesty International strongly condemns official indifference to persistent reports of ill-treatment in Turkish prisons and the recent deaths of prisoners in similar incursions, and calls for urgent safeguards to prevent further loss of life.

Torture is widely and systematically inflicted on detainees in Turkish police stations and gendarmeries. In prisons, deaths and severe injuries are now occurring increasingly frequently, when police or gendarmes brought in to quell prisoners’ protests take the opportunity to “punish” alleged or convicted members of illegal armed organizations.

After police and soldiers entered Diyarbakir E-type Prison on 4 October 1995, two prisoners died, one from suffocation, the other from injuries. On 21 September 1995, three more prisoners were beaten to death when police and gendarmes entered Buca Prison, near Izmir, following prisoners’ refusal to appear for roll-call. On that occasion, strenuous attempts by the local bar association to avoid conflict were apparently obstructed by prison officials.

On 13 December 1995, dozens of prisoners were also injured, some very seriously, when police entered Ümraniye prison and beat inmates.

Considerable tension is also being reported in other prisons throughout Turkey where political prisoners are being held, with prisoners occupying wings in Ankara Central Closed Prison and Buca Prison.

While acknowledging that prison authorities have the responsibility to maintain order, Amnesty International is appealing for the Justice Ministry to act urgently to ensure that in dealing with such incidents the authorities avoid the use of force or, where that is not practicable, restrict such force to the minimum necessary.

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For further information on the incidents mentioned above, refer to:

AI Index: EUR 44/112/94 (Diyarbakir Prison)

AI Index: EUR 44/98/95 (Buca Prison)

AI Index: EUR 44/152/95 (Umraniye Prison)