

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PUBLIC STATEMENT

AI Index: EUR 44/002/2013

28 January 2013

Turkey: Investigate attacks against Armenian women in Istanbul

Amnesty International calls on the Turkish authorities to carry out a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation into the series of attacks on elderly Armenian women in Istanbul.

In the last two months, four attacks, one of them fatal, took place in Samatya an area historically inhabited by Armenians in central Istanbul. All four women are Turkish citizens of Armenian origin.

The Turkish authorities have an obligation to investigate any alleged racist and/or religious bias behind the perpetration of these crimes. A failure to do so may amount to a violation of the European Convention of Human Rights, ratified by Turkey, and the prohibition of discrimination set forth by it.

Hate crimes constitute a serious form of discrimination. State authorities have not only to refrain from discriminating themselves but also exercise due diligence to prevent and combat discrimination from private parties.

It is regrettable that Turkish legislation does not foresee any legislative and policy measures ensuring that hate motives are systematically and thoroughly investigated and duly taken into account in the prosecution and sentencing.

Police insist that they are investigating the cases thoroughly. However, Amnesty International is concerned at public statements made by the authorities discounting the possibility of a racist motivation to the attacks.

Amnesty International believes that the authorities must carry out a thorough investigation into these attacks without discarding the possibility of hate motivation from the outset and take steps to prevent further attacks.

The incidents

In late November 2012, an 87 year-old woman was physically attacked in the street. She was severely beaten and as a result of the attack lost the sight in one eye.

A group of three men allegedly attempted to abduct another elderly woman while on her way to the church on the occasion of the orthodox Christmas on 6 January. The attackers reportedly fled after the intervention by other church goers.

On 28 December, an 85 year-old woman was found stabbed to death in her home. Her jewellery was stolen.

On 22 January, an 80 year-old woman was attacked and beaten as she was returning to her home.

End/