

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of Torture

12 February 1991

TURKEY: Emel At_c_ (f)
Zeki Tombak, editor-in-chief of Hedef (Target)
Erdo_an Ergin, working for Hedef
Salih Koç, also working for Hedef
Mehmet Güne_

On 9 February 1991 the five people named above were detained in Istanbul. The circumstances of their detention are not known. They are reported to be held incommunicado at Istanbul Police Headquarters and it is feared that they are being interrogated under torture.

Mehmet Güne_ is said to have been detained and severely tortured in 1982 and to have suffered ill-health as a consequence.

The political magazine Hedef started publication at the end of 1988 and most issues have been confiscated. Between May and December 1990 the magazine could not appear because printing houses were refusing to print publications which contained articles about the situation in the southeastern provinces under a state of emergency. This was the result of a government decree issued in April 1990 which severely curtailed reporting of events in the southeast. The decree was modified in December 1990 and in January another issue of Hedef could appear. Several of its editors and owners have been detained in the past and put on trial for alleged membership of an illegal organization. Those detained, most recently in April 1990, alleged having suffered severe torture while in police custody.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Turkey ratified the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture on 25 February 1988 and the UN Convention Against Torture on 2 August 1988. However, all information available to Amnesty International indicates that torture is still widespread and systematic in Turkey. Allegations of torture have continued since the transfer of power to a civilian government in 1983. Most allegations relate to ill-treatment of detainees in police custody during their initial interrogation when they are usually denied access to relatives or a lawyer. Under current legislation the maximum detention period before being formally charged or released is 24 hours; in cases involving three or more suspects or due to the 'nature of the crime' it may be extended to 15 days. This period may be extended to 30 days in areas under emergency legislation or martial law. Emergency legislation is currently in force in ten provinces in the southeast of Turkey.

In August 1990, the Turkish government derogated from Articles 5, 6, 8, 10, 11 and 13 of the European Convention on Human Rights, all of which contain important safeguards for human rights.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/express and airmail letters:

- urging that the five detainees named above are given prompt access to their families and lawyers and that they are not ill-treated while in detention;
- requesting to be informed of any charges against them.

APPEALS TO:

President Turgut Özal
Devlet Ba_kanli_i
06100 Ankara, Turkey

Telegrams: President Özal, Ankara, Turkey
Telexes: 42875 BBK TR
Faxes: (via Press Office) + 90 4 168 5012

Istanbul Emniyet Müdürü
Mehmet A_ar
Istanbul Chief of Police
_stanbul, Turkey

Telegrams: Emniyet Muduru, Istanbul, Turkey
Telexes: 30811 IEHM TR or 30812 EMMH TR

COPIES TO: Diplomatic representatives of Turkey in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 26 March 1991.