

PUBLIC

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27 August 2003

Further Information on UA 218/03 (EUR 44/020/2003, 17 July 2003) Prisoners of conscience

TURKEY **Sevim Yetkiner (f), human rights defender**
Baki Çelebi (m)

Sevim Yetkiner, chair of the Mus branch of the Human Rights Association (*Insan Haklari Dernegi* – IHD) and Baki Çelebi were released from Erzurum prison in eastern Turkey on 6 August.

Sevim Yetkiner and Baki Çelebi were imprisoned in Mus province, southeast Turkey, on 17 July after attending the funeral of a member of the illegal armed group the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK). They were charged under article 169 of the Turkish Penal Code for "aiding and abetting an illegal organization" by allegedly shouting pro-PKK slogans at the funeral. The charges against them have not been dropped and a trial against them continues.

Amnesty International is concerned that the charges brought against Sevim Yetkiner were a result of her attendance at the funeral, which was part of her legitimate activity as a human rights defender. If found guilty, Sevim Yetkiner may therefore be a prisoner of conscience. Baki Çelebi is not in fact a member of the IHD administration as stated in the original UA.

Sevim Yetkiner told Amnesty International, "The 21 days that I spent in prison reinforced my commitment in the struggle for human rights. This is a struggle that everyone in society should join". She is convinced that appeals from UA network had a huge impact on her treatment in the prison; she noticed a positive difference in her conditions and the attitude of the prison administration towards her. She also attributes her swift release to the pressure of the Amnesty International's campaigning. She thanked the organization warmly and said, "The appeals sent by AI members are effective and important - I have seen first-hand how important they are".

Many thanks to all those who sent appeals. Amnesty International will continue to monitor this case. Please send a final round of appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- expressing concern that the charges brought against Sevim Yetkiner may be connected to her legitimate work as a human rights defender, and that, if found guilty, she may be a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned for her human rights work;
- calling on the authorities to drop all charges against Sevim Yetkiner related to her work as a human rights defender;
- requesting that the authorities take steps to extend durable protection in law to the IHD and its staff and to allow human rights defenders to pursue unhindered their lawful role of monitoring and reporting human rights matters, in line with the UN Declaration on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders;
- calling on the authorities to take effective action to ensure all public servants recognize the legitimacy of the work of human rights defenders.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Justice
Mr Cemil Çiçek
Ministry of Justice
Adalet Bakanligi

06659 Ankara, Turkey

Telegram: Justice Minister, Ankara, Turkey

Fax: + 90 312 418 5667

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Deputy Prime Minister and State Minister with responsibility for Human Rights

Mr Abdullah Gül,

Office of the Prime Minister,

Basbakanlik,

06573 Ankara, Turkey

Fax: + 90 312 417 0476

and to diplomatic representatives of Turkey accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 8 October 2003.