

URGENT ACTION

HUNGER STRIKE ENDED; HEALTH RISKS REMAIN

Some 700 prisoners who had been on hunger strike have all ended their protest. Around 60 had been on hunger strike since 12 September. According to media and lawyers of the prisoners, many have been transferred to hospital for follow up care.

The hunger strikes were initiated in protest against the authorities' longstanding refusal to allow the imprisoned Kurdistan Workers' Party leader, Abdullah Öcalan to meet with his lawyers and to demand the provision of education in the Kurdish language. The hunger strikes were called off following a message from Abdullah Öcalan, transmitted through a member of his family who had been allowed to visit him in prison.

Lawyers representing the hunger strikers told Amnesty International that some prisoners had been transferred to hospital to receive medical care. Whilst the hunger strike has ended, there are ongoing medical concerns for those who were undertaking this protest, particularly for those who were on hunger strike for the longest period.

Please write immediately in Turkish or your own language:

- Reminding the authorities that whilst the hunger strike has ended, the need for medical care has not;
- Calling on the authorities to ensure that those who have been on hunger strike have adequate access to qualified medical professionals and any medical assessment, advice and treatment that they need to mitigate possible long term damage to their health following prolonged hunger strike;
- Calling on the authorities to ensure that no punitive measures are taken against prisoners who took part in the hunger strike.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 2 JANUARY 2013 TO:

Ministry of Justice

Sadullah Ergin
Adalet Bakanı
Adalet Bakanlığı
06659 Ankara, Turkey
Fax: +90 312 417 71 13 (keep trying)
Email: sadullahergin@adalet.gov.tr

Salutation: Dear Minister

Minister of Health

Recep Akdağ
Sağlık Bakanlığı
Mithatpasa Caddesi No:3
06410 Sıhhiye
Ankara
Fax: +90 312 431 4879
Email: adres@saqlik.gov.tr

Salutation: Dear Minister

Parliamentary Commission on Human Rights

Ayhan Sefer Üstün
Commission Chairperson
TBMM İnsan Hakları İnceleme Komisyonu
Bakanlıklar, 06543 Ankara, Turkey
Fax: +90 312 420 53 94
Email: insanhaklari@tbmm.gov.tr

Salutation: Dear Mr Üstün

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 329/12. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR44/022/2012/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In Turkey, prison hunger strikes have been repeatedly used as a method of protest. On 20 October 2000, more than 1,200 prisoners went on hunger strike; this was in protest at plans to move them to new prisons where they were to be housed in small cells, rather than dormitories that hold up to 60 prisoners. Prisoners were concerned that they would be at greater risk of assault or torture. When raids began on 19 December, some 200 were still on hunger strike and many of them were reportedly close to death. Turkish authorities intervened by force to end the hunger strikes with the operation they termed “return to life”. This operation led to the deaths of 30 prisoners and two soldiers during raids into 20 prisons. The Justice Minister reportedly stated that “at least 16 prisoners died, most of whom set themselves on fire”. He did not say how the other prisoners had died.

Hunger strikes continued in the following two years, claiming the lives of dozens of people – some of whom were not prisoners.

Amnesty International does not support hunger strikes, nor does it try to persuade hunger strikers to end such a protest. The organization opposes any punishment of hunger strikers and attempts to coerce them to end their hunger strike. Such measures violate their right to freedom of expression, and may also amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The authorities have an obligation to ensure prisoners’ right to life and health and must ensure that hunger strikers, like other prisoners, have adequate access to qualified health professionals and any medical assessment, advice and any treatment that they will accept voluntarily based on this assessment.

Name: Almost 700 prisoners on hunger strike in Turkey

Gender m/f: both

Further Information UA: 329/12 Index: EUR 44/024/2012 Issue Date: 21 November 2012