

UA 319/00

Torture/i

TURKEY Fahriye B_k_n (f), aged 65
_ekernaz Çakal (f), aged 56
Müyesser Güne_ (f), aged 48
Rahime Inci (f), aged 65
Azize Y_ld_z (f), aged 39
Murat Batgi, aged 31

A delegation of Kurdish women from eastern Turkey have reportedly been tortured and ill-treated, after they travelled to neighbouring Iraq to try to mediate between the two sides in the civil conflict in the Kurdish region in North Iraq. They were forced to sign statements, believed to be confessions, without reading them.

The women are members of the Peace Mothers Initiative, a Kurdish women's organisation based in Turkey which campaigns for peace in the region. The five women and their male interpreter were arrested by gendarmes at the Iraqi border on 4 October, at about midday. According to lawyers who were finally allowed to see them four days later, they were interrogated at the border town of Habur for the next nine hours, and then taken to another place where they were questioned until 9am the next day, by three men in plain clothes and a soldier.

After a medical check the women were taken to the Gendarmerie Headquarters in Silopi. They said they were blindfolded and interrogated by gendarmes, who tried to force them to make confessions. The gendarmes swore and insulted them, squeezed their throats so they could not breathe, slapped them, strangled them with their headscarves and smacked them on the back of their heads and on their necks. This continued even when they said that some of them had recently undergone surgery and had low blood pressure.

On 7 October they were finally brought before a prosecutor and remanded to Mardin Prison, and the following day they were finally allowed to see a delegation of lawyers from Diyarbak_r. The charges against them are not yet known.

Azize Y_ld_z made this statement on behalf of the group: "Because my husband took over the newspaper *2000 Yeni Gundem* [a newspaper aimed mainly at a Kurdish audience], they put more pressure on me than on the other mothers. Using unrepeatable curses and insults they told me that my husband had been arrested in Diyarbak_r and had confessed to all charges. They squeezed my throat and tore my hair, hit me with their fists and slapped me. On the first day I was forced to stand for 24 hours. I was interrogated three times, each time for five to six hours. I was put in a cell with another woman, and the other three women were in another cell. After they sprayed something into the cell, we started to vomit and bleed from our noses. They put pressure on us in particular to accuse our interpreter Murat Batgi. We heard him screaming as he was tortured. At the end of the interrogation we were forced to sign several documents: we did not know what they said and they were not read out. Although some of us mentioned that we didn't speak Turkish, we were interrogated without an interpreter. On 7 October we were brought to a public health post and then before a prosecutor. We told the prosecutor about the treatment at the gendarmerie. But he didn't care and told us 'be quiet about it'. But we told the prosecutor and the judge that we did not admit the charges".

The group's interpreter, Murat Batgi, reportedly suffered torture, which included squeezing his testicles, heavy beating and threats. He has been remanded to Silopi Prison.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Torture is apparently used routinely in Turkish police and gendarmerie stations, to extract confessions, to elicit information about illegal organizations, to intimidate detainees into becoming police informers or as unofficial punishment for presumed support of illegal organizations. Torture methods in Turkey documented by Amnesty International include severe beatings, being stripped naked and blindfolded, hosing with pressurized ice-cold water, suspending by the arms or wrists bound behind the victim's back, electric shocks, beating the soles of the feet, death threats and sexual assault.

Amnesty International has long been concerned at the Turkish authorities' reluctance to investigate allegations of torture. Officers accused of torture are rarely suspended from duty, and have in some cases been promoted. Detainees are almost invariably blindfolded during interrogation, so they often cannot identify their torturers, and since custody records are often sloppy or nonexistent, they cannot establish who was on duty when they were detained.

Any medical evidence of torture is frequently suppressed. Medical officers who falsify reports have been promoted, and doctors who scrupulously carry out their proper duties have been put on trial or imprisoned. Witness intimidation and a generalised climate of fear also contribute to impunity, as does prosecutors' reluctance to investigate the work of security force officers. Judges often refuse to investigate allegations of torture, leading to unfair trials, with confessions extracted under torture frequently used as grounds for imprisonment.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:

- expressing deep concern at the allegations of torture and ill-treatment made by the women and their interpreter;
- urging the government to carry out a full and impartial investigation, including an independent medical examination, to establish the truth of these allegations, and asking to be told the results;
- urging the authorities to suspend any officers accused of torture from duty while they are under investigation, and dismiss them from the forces if they are convicted;
- reminding the government of its obligations under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, to which Turkey is a state party: "No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment";
- reminding the authorities of their obligation under Article 15 of the UN Convention against Torture to "ensure that any statement which is established to have been made as a result of torture should not be invoked as evidence in any proceedings".

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Justice
 Professor Hikmet Sami Türk
 Adalet Bakan_,
 Adalet Bakanl____,
 06659 Ankara, Turkey

Telegrams: Adalet Bakan_, Ankara, Turkey

Faxes: + 90 312 417 3954 / 418 5667
Salutation: Dear Minister

Govenor of __rnak
__rnak Valisi
__rnak Valili_i
__rnak
Turkey

Telegrams: Sirnak Valiligi, Sirnak, Turkey
Salutation: Dear Governor

COPIES TO:

State Minister with responsibility for Human Rights
Mr Rü_tü Kaz_m Yücelen
Office of the Prime Minister
Ba_bakanl_k
06573 Ankara
Turkey
Faxes: + 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 30 November 2000.