

EXTERNAL

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EXTRA 77/96

Fear of "Disappearance" / Fear of Torture

22 May 19

TURKEY Özcan Elçi, aged 32, father of five

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Özcan Elçi, a shopkeeper from Alt_nova who was detained on 15 May 1996 when on business in the nearby town of Güroymak, province of Bitlis. His detention in the street in the town centre was witnessed by people who then informed his family.

Reportedly, some six other people, detained in Güroymak at the same time have meanwhile been formally arrested and committed to prison, while Özcan Elçi continues to be held incommunicado at an unknown location, presumably by the gendarmerie (soldiers carrying out police duties in rural areas). It is not known whether his detention has been duly registered and acknowledged by the authorities. Özcan Elçi is said to have been detained on at least one occasion previously.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Procedures laid down in the Turkish Criminal Procedure Code for the prompt and proper registration of detainees, and for notification of their families, are almost universally ignored. Lack of prompt registration and notification is not only extremely distressing for the families of detainees, but also creates the conditions in which "disappearances" and torture can occur.

People suspected of offences under the Anti-Terror Law can be held in police custody without access to family, friends or legal counsel for up to 30 days in the 10 provinces under State of Emergency in the southeast, and for 15 days in the rest of Turkey. When not being interrogated, detainees are held in cramped, airless and insanitary conditions. With no access to the outside world they are at the mercy of their interrogators. Torture is often applied to extract confessions, to elicit information about illegal organizations, to intimidate detainees into becoming police informers or as informal punishment for assumed support of illegal organizations. Torture methods include being stripped naked and blindfolded, hosing with pressurized ice-cold water, hanging by the arms or wrists bound behind the victim's back, electric shocks, beating the soles of the feet, death threats and sexual assault.

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

- expressing grave concern for the safety of Özcan Elçi, detained in Güroymak, Bitlis province, on 15 May 1996, and since held incommunicado at an unknown location;
- urging an immediate investigation to establish his current whereabouts;
- appealing that his detention be duly registered, his family informed of his whereabouts without delay and that he be promptly brought before a judge to be charged or released;
- seeking assurances that he is not subjected to torture or any other form of ill-treatment.

APPEALS TO:

1) Bitlis Chief Public Prosecutor
Cumhuriyet Ba_savc_s_
Bitlis C. Ba_savc_l____

Bitlis, Turkey

Telegrams: Cumhuriyet Bassavcısı, Bitlis, Turkey

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor

2) Chief of Gendarmerie in Bitlis

Bitlis Jandarma Komutani

Jandarma Komutanl____

Bitlis, Turkey

Telegrams: Jandarma Komutanligi, Bitlis, Turkey

Salutation: Dear Sir

3) Interior Minister

Mr Ülkü Güney

Ministry of Interior

_çi_leri Bakanl____

06644 Ankara, Turkey

Faxes: +90 312 418 1795

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Mr Emre Gönensay

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

D_i_leri Bakanl____

06100 Ankara

Faxes: +90 312 419 1547

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 19 June 1996.