

Public Statement

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Open letter by the Secretary General of Amnesty International to the Council of Ministers of the Turkish Republic

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30 November 2001

Open letter by the Secretary General of Amnesty International to the Council of Ministers of the Turkish Republic

Dear State Minister,

Amnesty International expresses its deep regret that the application to found an Amnesty International membership organization in Turkey was not signed by the Council of Ministers as required by article 12 of the Associations Law. The founding members of Amnesty International in Turkey submitted their application with our full support on 9 May 2001.

With more than a million members and supporters around the world, Amnesty International's aims are to contribute to the observance, throughout the world, of human rights as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The organization has formal relations with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Council of Europe, the Organization of African Unity and the Organization of American States. In 1977 Amnesty International was awarded the Nobel Peace prize for its contribution to "securing the ground for freedom, for justice and thereby also for peace in the world".

Amnesty International has welcomed recent initiatives in Turkey including a constitutional review designed to improve respect for human rights. Freedom of Association is a basic right guaranteed in many conventions to which Turkey is a state party and is furthermore guaranteed by the Turkish constitution. By failing to allow a local structure of Amnesty International to

establish in Turkey the government has missed an important opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to international and domestic human rights standards.

An officially registered Amnesty International presence in Turkey would enable Turkish citizens to contribute widely to our international campaigns on other countries, which would strengthen Amnesty International's worldwide effort to promote and protect human rights. Amnesty International membership in Turkey can also build an awareness and understanding of human rights in Turkey itself through human rights education and awareness programs, and by working for improvements in legislation.

We therefore ask you to reconsider the application from our members in Turkey, and we look forward to a response at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

*Irene Khan
Secretary General*

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