

EXTERNAL

AI Index: EUR 44/95/96

20 June 1996

Further information on EXTRA 88/96 (EUR 44/83/96, 10 June 1996) - Fear of ill-treatment / Possible Prisoners of conscience

TURKEY Zeyneb Baran (f), lawyer and board member of the Istanbul Human Rights Association (HRA)

and more than 200 other detainees

On 15 June 1996 about 200 people were detained at the regular Saturday vigil in Istiklal Street in Istanbul, which is held in protest at "disappearances" in Turkey, and taken to the Security Branch of Istanbul Police Headquarters. All the detainees were released the same evening. During the day, the office of the HRA had been surrounded by police forces and visitors threatened with immediate arrest if they entered the building.

This was the second mass detention within a week. On 8 June, hundreds of people were arrested during a similar vigil (see original EXTRA). They, too, have now all been released, the majority on 9 and 10 June. After she was released, Zeyneb Baran told Amnesty International: *"I was detained on 8 June in front of the HRA which was surrounded by about 200 police officers. The commander, who was in plainclothes, asked me where I was going. I told him I was on my way to the HRA, of which I am a board member. He gave the police the order to arrest me. I was taken to Gayrettepe Police Station from where I was released on 10 June at 1pm. We had no access to lawyers or relatives during the detention. I have not witnessed any ill-treatment while in detention, but detainees who were released with me reported that a female detainee had been taken to a cell and severely beaten. This apparently happened just before we were released"*.

Some detainees were reportedly kept at the Anti-Terror Branch of Istanbul Police Headquarters after 10 June. One of them, a female detainee, who has now been released, told Amnesty International: *"Most of the others were released on 9 June - I wasn't. On 10 June I was taken to the block C where I was put into a cell with eight other detainees. The guards forbade us to talk. They turned the music on at a high volume. They blindfolded me before they tortured me: I was insulted, forced to undress and hosed with cold pressurized water. I was also given electric shocks and hanged. I was tortured on several occasions"*.

Amnesty International has not been informed of any charges having been brought against any of the detainees.

Amnesty International believes that the regular Saturday vigils in Istanbul have a vital role in the prevention of further "disappearances" in Turkey. It is alarmed at frequent reports of the harassment of participants by police forces, and is deeply disturbed by the mass detentions on 8 and 15 June. The organization condemns these detentions which were apparently carried out in order to suppress non-violent expression of opinion. It would consider any person detained under such circumstances to be a prisoner of conscience.

Amnesty International is also concerned about the increasing harassment of members of the Turkish HRA and lawyers by the authorities in order to prevent them from exercising their right to freedom of expression and, in the case of lawyers, to prevent them from doing their work.

On 18 June, lawyers, human rights defenders - among them Ercan Kanar (President) and Eren Keskin (former Secretary) of the Istanbul HRA - and trade unionists were detained at the post office in the Sirkeci district of Istanbul. They wanted to send a telegram to the Prime Minister requesting prison conditions in Turkey be improved. The group was met by a large number of police officers, who had dogs and armoured vehicles. The police arrested the participants after they refused to abandon their gesture. The detainees were taken to the Security Branch of Istanbul Police Headquarters. All of them have now been released.

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

- expressing concern about the detention of hundreds of participants at vigils in Istanbul in protest at "disappearances" in Turkey on 8 June and 15 June;
- expressing concern at reports of ill-treatment and torture of detainees, calling for a full and impartial investigation and for anyone found responsible for torture to be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to ensure that the right to non-violent expression of opinion is respected in Turkey, and urging that future Saturday vigils - which play a vital role in preventing further "disappearances" in the country - be allowed to take place free from harassment and fear of arrest.

APPEALS TO:

President Süleyman Demirel

Office of the President

Cumhur Ba_kanl____

06100 Ankara, Turkey

Faxes: +90 312 4685026

Telegrams: President Demirel, Ankara, Turkey

Salutation: Your Excellency

Istanbul Chief of Police

Mr Kemal Yaz_c_o_lu

Emniyet Müdürü

Istanbul, Turkey

Telegrams: Chief of Police, Istanbul, Turkey

Salutation: Dear Chief of Police

Ministry of Interior

Iç_i_leri Bakanl____

06644 Ankara, Turkey

Faxes: +90 312 4181795

Telegrams: Interior Minister, Ankara, Turkey

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES 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 20 July 1996