

213/95

AI INDEX: EUR 44/126/95

7 NOVEMBER 1995

TURKEY: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL GRAVELY CONCERNED AS  
HUNGER-STRIKERS OPPOSING POLICE BRUTALITY ARE HOSPITALIZED

As the hunger-strike in Turkish prisons reaches its 34th day -- and the health of prisoners refusing food is now in danger -- Amnesty International today wrote to the Turkish government expressing serious concern for their health.

The hunger-strikers, based at seven prisons, are appealing for an end to brutal and degrading treatment and for those responsible for beating to death three remand political prisoners at Buca Prison near Izmir in Western Turkey on 21 September 1995 to be brought to justice.

"These fatal beatings are the latest in a pattern of brutality throughout the Turkish prison system -- a pattern in which those responsible for assaults have, almost without exception, escaped trial and punishment," Amnesty International said.

The current hunger-strike, which has resulted in three prisoners from Elazi\_ prison being hospitalized, was triggered by incidents at Buca Prison in Izmir -- notorious for its harsh regime. In April, Salih I\_\_k, a sick prisoner, died in Buca Prison, after the prison authorities apparently failed to ensure he received prompt medical attention. He died without having had access to a doctor, due to inaction by prison staff.

In July, following the escape of four prisoners, 20 inmates were severely beaten on their way to Izmir State Security Court. Some were reportedly taken into court unconscious, others bleeding from their mouths and noses so that the hearing had to be postponed. The prisoner Murat Özsat is still bed-ridden as a result of damage to his spine. The gendarmes allegedly responsible for this attack have not been prosecuted.

On 21 September 1995, a large force of gendarmes used explosives to force entry into Ward 6 at Buca Prison where prisoners remanded or convicted for alleged membership of DHKP-C<sup>1</sup> were refusing to appear for roll-call in protest at brutal treatment to which they and other prisoners had been subjected. After subduing Ward 6, the gendarmes allegedly brought the prisoners into the courtyard one by one and beat them savagely with chains, iron bars, sticks and truncheons.

A prisoner known to Amnesty International, but whose name is withheld for his own safety, gave his account of what happened: "The soldiers forced us into a corner with a high pressure hose and entered the room... The soldiers attacked us with iron bars, sticks and truncheons. Some of the soldiers jumped from the top bunks onto those of us who had fallen on the floor. I lost consciousness due to a blow on the head. When I came to I was being dragged through the ward while they hit me. When I tried to get up, I received a heavy blow on the head. When I regained consciousness again in the prison courtyard, one of the wardens was strangling me. Two other wardens pulled him off me."

---

<sup>1</sup>Revolutionary People's Liberation Party - Front - formerly *Devrimci Sol* (Revolutionary Left).

It seems that the prisoners were taken one by one into the courtyard and savagely beaten. Nevzat Sa\_n\_ç, a prisoner held in a neighbouring ward which opens onto the same courtyard, gave the following account: "There was no sound from those prisoners thrown into the courtyard. You could only hear their gasping. They were beaten on their heads. The courtyard was awash with blood which was on the walls and even the ceiling."

As a result of the beating three young men, Yusuf Ba\_, U\_ur Sar\_aslan and Turan K\_l\_nç, died. Thirty-seven prisoners were hospitalized – of whom seven were kept in hospital with severe injuries, mainly to the head. The injuries described in Turan K\_l\_nç's autopsy report suggest a ferocious attack: "general body trauma, broken skull, subdural and subarachnoidal haemorrhage, broken ribs, laceration and haemorrhage of the left lung".

In another incident, in October 1994, 50 remand prisoners were injured when gendarmes and police entered Diyarbak\_r E-type Prison to remove a prisoner for further interrogation. Although prisoners resisted security forces with barricades, it is clear that unnecessary force was used. One prisoner died of asphyxiation, the other of injuries from beating and medical neglect. No legal proceedings have yet been opened in this case, or against those responsible for the killing of the three prisoners at Buca.

Amnesty International is urging the Justice Minister to take steps promptly to halt ill-treatment and beatings of prisoners. The most effective measure in the short term would be to ensure that cases of ill-treatment, beating and medical neglect raised earlier by Amnesty International are investigated without further delay, and that those found responsible are promptly brought to justice. A commitment not to delay or suppress such prosecutions would, it is hoped, pave the way to an early resolution of hunger-strikes before fatalities occur.

In the longer term, Amnesty International would endorse measures such as those proposed in a draft bill presented to the Turkish Parliament in 1993 by the former Minister of Justice Seyfi Oktay, for bringing medical treatment of prisoners (currently the responsibility of the Ministry of Health) and transport to and from courts (now the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior) under the authority of the Justice Ministry, which is responsible for the prison system.

## **BACKGROUND**

Although systematic torture and death in custody of detainees is mainly a widespread problem in police stations rather than prisons, Amnesty International has frequently raised allegations of ill-treatment of remand and convicted prisoners with the Turkish government.

Most reports of ill-treatment have occurred when prisoners are being transported in and out of prison under guard by gendarmes for trial or medical treatment, or alternatively, when gendarmes and police are brought into prisons to quell prisoners' protests. Police and gendarmes take these opportunities to "punish" alleged or convicted members of illegal armed organizations.

ENDS\