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TURKEY: Imprisonment of Dogu Perinçek

UPDATE NO. 1

Dogu Perinçek, aged 48, married with three children, was arrested on 7 August 1990 when he was about to attend a trial in Diyarbakır State Security Court. He is charged with "disseminating separatist propaganda" during speeches he gave in February and March 1990 in Siverek, Nusaybin, Batman, Van and Diyarbakır. Most of the speeches made reference to the Kurdish question: according to Amnesty International's information Dogu Perinçek did not advocate violence.

Dogu Perinçek appeared on the morning of 29 August in the State Security Court in Diyarbakır for the second hearing of his case which was attended by two Amnesty International observers. 35 lawyers were also present to defend Dogu Perinçek.

A transcript had been made of the speech made in Van, and at Dogu Perinçek's insistence was read out in court. The speech mentioned the legendary Kurdish hero Kawa, whose liberation of the peoples of the Middle East is commemorated on the feast of Newroz (about the time of the year when the speech was given) and went on to discuss the need for recognition of the rights of the Kurdish people and for unity among all people working for democracy in Turkey. Dogu Perinçek accepted the transcript as accurate after some minor corrections.

There followed a speech by the principal defence lawyer, and a request that the prisoner should be released. This request was turned down by the judges who ruled that Dogu Perinçek should remain in custody at least until the next hearing on 27 September. At this point in the proceedings the audience of more than 50 began to clap in protest against the decision and the police intervened. The lawyers demanded that the judges clear the courtroom of police. When this was accomplished Dogu Perinçek made an angry protest that the case had been brought against him on political rather than legal grounds, after which the hearing was closed.

Amnesty International knows of no evidence that Dogu Perinçek advocated the use of violence in any of his speeches. He is, therefore, considered to be a prisoner of conscience and his imprisonment to be in violation of his right to freedom of expression, as set out in Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, to which Turkey is a State Party. Amnesty International is appealing for his immediate and unconditional release.