

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of Torture

10 October 1990

TURKEY: Hikmet Akin)
Mahmut Karaman) students at Diyarbakir University
Ibrahim Cihandemir)
Sual Ozgul)

plus three others

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Seven students from the Law Faculty of Diyarbakir University, including the four named above, were reportedly detained on 9 October. It is believed that they were detained in connection with students' protests when the university reopened at the beginning of the new academic year. The students are being held at the Rapid Force Headquarters in Diyarbakir and it is feared that they may be tortured during interrogation.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Turkey has a Kurdish ethnic minority which is not officially recognized by the authorities, but is estimated to number some 10 million people. The Kurdish population lives mainly in southeastern Turkey. Frequent allegations of torture and ill-treatment have been received from the region and the number of torture allegations increased substantially after the 1980 military coup. Since August 1984, when Kurdish guerrillas - members of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) - started armed attacks, an alarming number of reports of ill-treatment of detainees by the security forces have come from the eastern and southeastern provinces, where more than 2000 lives so far have been lost in the continuing fighting.

Turkey ratified the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture on 25 February 1988 and the UN Convention Against Torture on 2 August 1988. However, all information available to Amnesty International indicates that torture is still widespread and systematic in Turkey. Allegations of torture have continued since the transfer of power to a civilian government in 1983. Most allegations relate to ill-treatment of detainees in police custody during their initial interrogation when they are usually denied access to relatives or a lawyer. Under current legislation the maximum detention period before being formally charged or released is 24 hours; in cases involving three or more suspects or due to the 'nature of the crime' it may be extended to 15 days. This period may be extended to 30 days in areas under emergency legislation or martial law. Emergency legislation is currently in force in ten provinces, including Diyarbakir.

In May 1990 the Turkish government issued decrees 424 and 425, further extending the already extraordinary powers of the Emergency Legislation

Governor, and subsequently, in August 1990, the government derogated from Articles 5, 6, 8, 10, 11 and 13 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- urging that the seven students are given prompt access to their families and lawyers and that they are not ill-treated while in detention;
- requesting to be informed of any charges against them.

APPEALS TO

Prime Minister Yildirim Akbulut
Office of the Prime Minister
Basbakanlik
Ankara, Turkey

Telegrams: Prime Minister, Ankara, Turkey
Telexes: 44061/44062/44063 bbmt tr
42099 basb tr
42875 bbk tr

Faxes: 90 41 17 04 76 PRIME MINISTER

Diyarbakir Emniyet Müdürü
Aydin Genc
Diyarbakir Chief of Police
Diyarbakir, Turkey

Telegrams: Emniyet Muduru, Diyarbakir, Turkey

COPIES TO: Diplomatic representatives of Turkey in your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 10 November 1990.