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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL (FOR RESPONSE ONLY) - **TURKEY**

NOTE: We are not sending out the item on Turkey to international media. This is a reactive statement that we are sending to section press officers to help in answering questions that arise from the sentencing today of eight Kurdish parliamentary deputies.

NOTE: A correction should be made to News Service 276 on Belize. John Tackaberry of the Canadian (English) Section has caught a mistake in the first sentence. The discussion at the Americas Summit in Miami, where heads of state from the Americas and the Caribbean are meeting, does not include human rights. The original sentence implies that it is on the agenda. Please make this correction before using.

Also note that the statement on Belize did not include the name of the third person to be executed. His name is Nicolàs Antonio Guevara, age 34, sentenced to death on 16 December 1993 for the murder of the manager of the Golden Button Ranch, in Northern Belize, in November 1992. His appeal was dismissed by the Belize Court of Appeal on 9 May 1994.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Egypt - 10 December - SEE NEWS SERVICE 277

Afghanistan - 15 December - SEE NEWS SERVICES 275 AND 267

Bosnia - CANCELLED - SEE NEWS SERVICE 268

Sudan - 25 January - SEE NEWS SERVICES 275 AND 261

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TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

China - 9 December - SEE NEWS SERVICE 277

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FOR EXTERNAL RELEASE - FOR RESPONSE ONLY

TURKEY: KURDISH DEPUTIES SENTENCED TO LONG PRISON TERMS

In a verdict given by Ankara State Security Court this morning, 8 December, all eight Kurdish parliamentary deputies tried for alleged "separatist" activities received prison sentences.

Orhan Do_an, Hatip Dicle, Selim Sadak, Ahmet Türk, and Leyla Zana were sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment under Article 169 of the Turkish Penal Code for "sheltering or assisting" members of the illegal Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK). Sedat Yurtta_ was sentenced to seven years and six months for the same offence, while Mahmut Al_nak and S_rr_ Sak_k were each sentenced to three years and six months and heavy fines for "separatist propaganda".

All sentences were given within the terms of the Anti-Terror Law, under which not less than 75% of the term must be served. The sentences will automatically go to the Appeal Court. Mahmut Al_nak and S_rr_ Sak_k were released pending that appeal. All were members of the mainly Kurdish HEP (People's Labour Party) and DEP (Democracy Party) parties, which were closed by the Constitutional Court for "separatism".

Amnesty International notes that the deputies were accused mainly on the basis of public statements they had made which contained no advocacy of violence. There were also allegations that contacts amounting to conspiracy had taken place. Most of the evidence to support these allegations consisted of statements given by so-called "confessors" in exchange for a reduction of sentence, and was seriously flawed or proved to be plainly false.

Amnesty International welcomes the release of S_rr_ Sak_k and Mahmut Al_nak, and believes that most, if not all, of the convicted parliamentary deputies are or were prisoners of conscience held in contravention of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, relating to the right to freedom of expression. Turkey is a state party to this convention. The organization awaits the reasoned judgment of the court to give a final opinion on the convictions and the fairness of the trial.

This judgment is part of a general attack on freedom of expression which is intensifying in Turkey. The number of people imprisoned or threatened with imprisonment for expressing their non-violent opinions (principally in connection with the situation of Turkey's Kurdish minority) is on the increase. The three-year-sentence imposed on Do_u Perinçek for calling for brotherhood between Turks and Kurds in a televised interview while leader of the Socialist Party (also closed by the Constitutional Court) was confirmed at appeal in November.

At least 80 writers and journalists are currently remanded in custody pending trials or serving sentences, mainly under Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law which provides for prison sentences for any statement interpreted by prosecutors and courts as "separatist propaganda".

Extrajudicial methods of gagging freedom of expression are still more chilling. More than one hundred members of HEP, DEP and its successor HADEP (People's Democracy Party) have been killed - either shot down in the street by unidentified assassins, "disappeared" or openly abducted and later killed by members of the security forces.

Mehmet Sincar, colleague of the parliamentary deputies sentenced today, was shot dead in Batman on 4 September 1993 when heavy police surveillance was briefly and mysteriously lifted. Attempts have also been made on the life of Leyla Zana. The headquarters of DEP were bombed in 1993, and on 3 December 1994, following a long history of legal and illegal attacks (including the killing and "disappearance" of its journalists), the premises of the Kurdish-owned newspaper *Özgür Ülke* (Free Country) were hit by a series of synchronized massive explosions at *Özgür Ülke's* publishing and printing facilities in Ankara and Istanbul. One person was killed, and four were very seriously injured.

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