

WORLDWIDE APPEALS
JUNE 1997

Turkey: Prisoner of Conscience

Osman Murat Ülke was detained in Izmir on 7 October 1996, more than a year after he publicly burned his call-up papers and declared that, as a pacifist, he would "never, ever, conduct military service in any way". He is a prisoner of conscience, and the first conscientious objector in Turkey to openly declare his opposition to military service.

Military courts have since sentenced him to 11 months' imprisonment for charges such as "alienating the public from the institution of military service" and "continuing disobedience".

However, two further trials pending leave him facing 18 years in prison for offences which include "using the trick of claiming the right to conscientious objection in order to avoid military service"; this alone carries a maximum sentence of 10 years' imprisonment.

The right to refuse military service for reasons of conscience is inherent in the notion of freedom of thought, conscience and religion as laid down in a number of international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, Turkey's system of conscription makes no provision for conscientious objection.

+Please write, asking for the immediate and unconditional release of Osman Murat Ülke, and for the introduction of legislation recognizing the right to conscientious objection and providing for a civilian alternative to military service for conscientious objectors, to: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mrs Tansu Çiller/ Office of the Prime Minister/ Ba_bakanl_k/ 06573 Ankara/ Turkey. You may also send greeting cards to Osman Murat Ülke himself at: Osman Murat Ülke/ 1. Taktik Hava Kuvvetleri Komutanl___/ Eski_ehir/ Turkey.

Philippines: Death Penalty

In February 1997, the Philippine Supreme Court again upheld the death sentence passed on Leo Pilo Echegaray. This is the first death sentence to have been confirmed by the Supreme Court since the death penalty was reintroduced in the Philippines at the end of 1993.

Leo Pilo Echegaray, a house painter, was convicted of raping his step-daughter and sentenced to death in September 1994. He has been held in solitary confinement since June 1996, when his sentence was first confirmed. In April 1997, the Supreme Court ruled that there could be no further legal appeals on his behalf.

The law stipulates that executions must be carried out between 12 and 18 months after a death sentence is confirmed. Fears that Leo Pilo Echegaray's execution could be imminent have been heightened by announcements in the press by the Department of Justice that he will be executed by lethal injection in August 1997. An execution chamber has already been built and the authorities have advertised for executioners to be appointed.

AI is concerned that if the execution — the first since 1976 — takes place, it may unleash a flood of further executions. Around 300 people have been sentenced to death since 1994, and about 12 new death sentences are being passed each month. The majority of those on death row in the Philippines are from the poorest sections of society and therefore do not have the access to the best legal defence.

+Please write, calling for Leo Pilo Echegaray's death sentence to be commuted; expressing unconditional opposition to the death penalty as a violation of the right to life; stressing that the death penalty is not a solution to rising crime; and calling for the commutation of all death sentences and the abolition of the death penalty, to: President Fidel V. Ramos/ Malacañang Palace/ Manila/ Philippines.

Guinea-Bissau: Police killing

Naruna Ahire Uwaifo, a Nigerian national, was shot dead by police during a demonstration in Bissau, the capital of Guinea-Bissau, in September 1996.

He and 49 other men of various African nationalities had been expelled from Spain in June 1996. Some either had not been able to submit asylum claims in Spain or did not have their claims thoroughly examined. On arrival in Guinea-Bissau the 50 were detained and many were severely beaten. Gradually they were allowed more freedom and were able to leave the prison.

In August, six of the detainees reluctantly obeyed orders to return to their country. The remaining 44 spent several days on hunger-strike in protest. On 23 September, with no end to the uncertainty of their situation in sight, the detainees and Guinea-Bissau sympathizers demonstrated to protest about their treatment in Spain and Guinea-Bissau. When some demonstrators began to damage cars the police arrived and shot in the air and into the crowd.

Naruna Ahire Uwaifo was reportedly sitting on a low wall near the prison when he was killed. Several other demonstrators were arrested and beaten, including an elderly woman who lived near the prison and who had befriended the detainees — she was stripped naked, beaten, and kicked before being released.

By December 1996 all except one of the detainees, a Rwandese national, had been repatriated. There has been no inquiry into the death of Naruna Ahire Uwaifo or into the beatings which took place in prison or during the demonstration.

+Please write, calling for full judicial inquiries into the death of Naruna Ahire Uwaifo and into the beatings in prison and during the demonstration, and for any official suspected of using torture, ill-treatment or excessive use of force to be brought to justice, to: His Excellency, President João Bernardo Vieira/ Presidente da República/ Palácio da República/ Praça dos Heróis Nacionais/ Bissau/ Guinea-Bissau. Faxes: + 245 20 20 07/ Telexes: 251 pcr bi/ Telegrams: Presidente Vieira, Bissau, Guinea-Bissau.