

UA 10/01 Fear for safety/fear of arrest of human rights defenders  
16 January 2001

**TURKEY** **Nimet Tanr\_kulu (f) , member of the Turkish Human Rights Association (IHD)**  
**Erdal Karahanl\_ , ÖDP Deputy Chairman**  
**Sabahattin U\_ra\_ , ÖDP Executive Board Member**  
**Sinan Tutan , ÖDP Istanbul Provincial Secretary**  
**Other human rights defenders and supporters of prisoners on hunger strike**

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A longstanding human rights defender and three leading politicians have been detained for protesting against recent prison raids which led to the death of at least 30 prisoners. Amnesty International considers them to be prisoners of conscience and is concerned for their safety. The organization also fears that others may be detained solely for expressing their views as the Turkish authorities step up their campaign against human rights defenders.

The four activists named above were arrested on 7 January as they took part in a ceremony to lay a wreath in front of the Democratic Left Party [DSP] headquarters in Istanbul to protest against the prison raids that took place on 19 December 2000. The police reportedly beat and forcefully pushed the demonstrators. More than 30 people were detained, most of whom were released on 8 January. The four named above remain in custody and have been charged with breaching the Law on Demonstrations. Their trial will commence on 6 February.

Nimet Tanr\_kulu, a member of the *\_nsan Haklari Dernegi* (IHD), Turkish Human Rights Association, is reportedly held at the Bakirkoy Women's and Children's Prison in Istanbul. She is a well-known human rights defender, who has been known to Amnesty International for years for her involvement with a weekly vigil organized by a group called the "Saturday Mothers" to protest on behalf of people who have "disappeared" while in custody.

Erdal Karahanl\_ , Sabahattin U\_ra\_ and Sinan Tutan are being held at the Bayrampasa Special Type Prison in Istanbul. They are members of the Freedom and Solidarity Party (ÖDP), a prominent legal opposition party which has criticised the government's plans for changes to the prison system.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

On 19 December 2000, the Turkish authorities carried out a number of brutal raids on prisons to stop prisoners from continuing a hunger strike in protest against planned changes to the prison system. At least 30 prisoners and two gendarmes died in the course of the operation. Since then, prisoners moved to the new "F-type" prisons have reportedly been beaten and tortured. Over 1000 prisoners are on indefinite hunger strike, and nearly 400 are on a so-called death fast, refusing to take anything but water and small amounts of sugar and salt. Many have been fasting for more than 70 days. (see UA 385/00, EUR 44/73/00, 20 December 2000 and follow-up EUR 44/002/2001, 11 January)

Human rights defenders and supporters of the hunger striking prisoners have come under increasing pressure in recent weeks as the Turkish government has attempted to silence criticism of the new prison system. Many have been threatened, beaten or detained, and the authorities have indicated that criticism of the new prison system may be deemed a criminal offence. Several human rights groups have been closed down, including five Human Rights Association (IDH) branches, and the police have repeatedly used excessive force against demonstrators. (see UA 378/00, EUR 44/69/00, 13 December 2000 and follow-up EUR 44/75/00, 21 December 2000)

The Turkish authorities have transferred up to 1000 prisoners to the new F-type prisons where they are housed in small cells rather than in dormitories, raising concern that prisoners will be isolated and at greater risk of assault or torture if they are locked up alone or in small groups. It is expected that more prisoners will be moved as soon as prisons under construction are ready. Amnesty International has written to the authorities to express concern about a possible regime of isolation in the new prisons which might amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and which would facilitate torture and ill-treatment.

**FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:**

- urging the authorities to guarantee the safety of prisoners of conscience Nimet Tanr\_kulu, Erdal Karahanl\_, Sabahattin U\_ra\_ and Sinan Tutan, calling for their immediate and unconditional release and to drop all charges against them;
- urging the authorities to stop the detention and arrest of human rights defenders;
- asking for the Human Rights Association's [IHD] branches to be reopened;
- requesting that human rights defenders are allowed unhindered to pursue their lawful role of monitoring and reporting human rights matters as set out in the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Defenders Resolution;
- calling on the authorities to take effective action to ensure that all public servants recognize the legitimacy of the work of human rights defenders.

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**Salutation: Dear Minister**

Minister of Justice

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**Faxes: + 90 312 417 3954 / 418 5667**

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

Ankara Chief of Police

Ankara Emniyet Müdürü

Ankara Emniyet Müdürlü\_ü

Ankara, Turkey

**Telegrams: Ankara Emniyet Müdürü, Ankara, Turkey**

**Salutation: Dear Chief of Police**

Istanbul Chief of Police

Istanbul Emniyet Müdürü

Istanbul Emniyet Müdürlü\_ü

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**Telegrams: Istanbul Emniyet Müdürü, Istanbul, Turkey**

**Salutation: Dear Chief of Police**

**COPIES TO:**

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and to diplomatic representatives of Turkey accredited to your country.

**Please could appeal writers in EU member countries also send copies to their Minister of Foreign Affairs.**

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 27 February 2001.