

# £TURKEY

## @Escalation in human rights abuses against Kurdish villagers

*Amnesty International is receiving information suggesting that a major offensive by government forces to eradicate the PKK has begun, and fears that this offensive will be accompanied by serious human rights abuses by both the government forces and guerrillas of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK). In the face of the deteriorating situation, on 30 June 1993 Amnesty International wrote to Prime Minister Tansu Çiller and to Abdullah Öcalan, General Secretary of the PKK, raising specific concerns about several recent incidents, and urging that all possible steps be taken to safeguard human rights during the escalating conflict.*

### *Conflict and cease-fire*

Guerrillas of the PKK have been fighting government forces in the southeastern provinces of Turkey since 1984. Originally they demanded a separate state for Turkey's estimated 10 million Kurds, though this demand was subsequently modified to more limited objectives. More than 6,000 lives have been lost on both sides and among the civilian population in this conflict which has been marked by serious human rights abuses both by the government and by the PKK. A state of emergency is in force in 10 provinces in the region and the Emergency Legislation Governor in Diyarbakir has extraordinary powers over three additional provinces.

In mid-March 1993 the PKK declared a unilateral cease-fire and stated that it wished to pursue its objectives through the democratic channels available in Turkey. The PKK did not withdraw its guerrillas, and operations by the security forces continued. However, Amnesty International noted that there was a significant improvement in human rights in the area during the cease-fire. "Executions" of village guards (village guards are armed and paid by the government to fight the PKK) and alleged informers by the PKK virtually ceased, while killings of government opponents (of which there were hundreds in 1992 and early 1993 - often in circumstances which suggested the collusion of security forces) also halted temporarily. During the course of the cease-fire, expectations were voiced by the People's Labour Party (HEP - a parliamentary party which is generally perceived as "the Kurdish party") that the government should halt military operations generally perceived as "the Kurdish party") that the government should halt military operations and enact confidence-building measures in the region. In particular it was hoped that the village guard system would be abolished. No concrete steps were taken, though modification of the village guard system and lifting of the emergency powers legislation were reportedly discussed at a high level - both of which would have had positive effects on human rights.

However, the cease-fire began to disintegrate when on 24 May guerrillas of the PKK ambushed a convoy of soldiers, reportedly travelling unarmed and in civilian clothes. The guerrillas abducted and then killed 32 soldiers and four civilians. This act was condemned by Amnesty International, and the leadership of the PKK later publicly expressed regret about the incident.

*There are more than 30,000 village guards in southeast Turkey. Village guards have been the victims, as well as the perpetrators, of human rights abuses.*

Government security forces immediately responded with large-scale military operations covering the entire region, and the guerrillas recommenced raids on security posts and convoys, and on villages which were part of the village guard system. On 8 June the PKK formally called off the cease-fire.

On 11 June Amnesty International wrote to the Turkish Government and to the leadership of the PKK noting that the cease-fire had been warmly welcomed by both the media and the general public throughout Turkey. The organization also expressed the view that both sides in the conflict were sincere in wishing an end to the misery which nine years of fighting had brought about, and hoped that this new development was the first step on a path which would finally halt torture, killings and other abuses. As fighting broke out once again it appeared that both sides were being drawn unwillingly by the course of events back into a human rights crisis, and Amnesty International called on both sides to pull back from the brink and take steps to ensure the protection of human rights and basic humanitarian standards.

### *Military escalation*

During June, fighting intensified and both the government and the PKK made it clear that they were preparing to pursue their respective ends with an unprecedented scale of military activity. On 8 June the leadership of the PKK reportedly said, "the armed struggle will be escalated and lots of blood could be spilled" (*Turkish Daily News*, 9 June). On the same day Tsmet Sezgin, then Interior Minister, stated "The security forces are determined to fight with all their resources until this terrorism and separatism are eradicated" (*Reuters*, 8 June). *The Independent* of 25 June reported an unnamed Turkish official as saying, "It's now just a question of when it starts. A bloodbath is a near certainty". Massive movements of troops and equipment have been recorded.

Amnesty International takes no position on armed conflicts, or indeed cease-fires or peace initiatives. But during June the organization noted a surge in allegations that human rights abuses were being committed by government forces and by members of the PKK, and fears that worse may be in store.

*Human rights violations by security forces in operations in villages*

On the basis of detailed information and evidence received by Amnesty International in the past, it can be anticipated that an important part of government operations will be security raids on villages - particularly villages which refuse to join the village guard system and which are therefore suspected of giving support to the guerrillas<sup>1</sup>. Security operations in villages are usually carried out by gendarmes (soldiers carrying out police duties in rural areas), members of special teams (heavily-armed units operating under the control of the Interior Ministry for close combat with guerrillas), village guards or all three acting together. Normally no judicial authority (such as a judge or prosecutor) is present. The members of the village are assembled in the village square, and those selected for interrogation are either taken away to a police station, gendarmerie or other place of detention, or are interrogated in the village itself. Unprotected by the most basic safeguards against torture, such villagers are frequently exposed to the most brutal treatment - sometimes resulting in terrible injuries or even death.

On 20 February 1993, security forces came to the village of Ormaniçi, near Güçlükonak, in the province of \_\_mak. According to statements given by the security forces, the villagers opened fire on gendarmerie who came to search the houses, killing one soldier - as a result of which the gendarmerie returned fire using rocket-propelled grenades and mortars causing damage to property and the death of a child.

According to a statement later given to the state prosecutor by Mehmet Aslan, the *muhtar* (village head man), Ormaniçi was surrounded by a large number of gendarmes and persons wearing masks - presumably members of the special team - who were firing at random towards the houses. They then searched the houses. The *muhtar* claims that he accompanied a group of soldiers who were searching the houses, and that a soldier outside fired through the window at him, accidentally killing one of the soldiers who was conducting the search.

According to an eye-witness account given by another villager, the soldiers evacuated the houses and threw hand-grenades in. The evacuation was incomplete, however, since Abide Ekin (f), a three-year-old child, was killed by the blast from a hand-grenade while she sheltered in the basement of her home with her mother Mevlide Ekin. The inhabitants were gathered together, in two separate groups - in one group the men, and in the other the women and children. The men were made to lie face down all day in sub-zero temperatures and subjected to beating and other forms of ill-treatment. The village livestock - hundreds of sheep, goats and mules - were all killed.

Later that day, most of the male villagers were tied together, blindfolded and marched into the town of Güçlükonak several kilometres away, where they were kept in a construction site near Güçlükonak Gendarmerie headquarters for 12 days, without shoes or adequate clothing and stripped naked for interrogations in temperatures which were frequently well below zero while they were subjected to various forms of torture. It is alleged that they were hosed with cold water, raped with truncheons and bottles, that in some cases toenails and fingernails were pulled out with pliers,

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<sup>1</sup> There are some 32,000 village guards. Membership of the corps is theoretically voluntary, but villagers are effectively caught between two fires. Many are reluctant to serve as village guards for fear of reprisals from the guerrillas, but those who refuse are often subject to reprisals by the security forces or village guards from neighbouring villages who accuse them of actively or passively supporting the guerrillas.

and that excrement was mixed with their food. Osman Ekinci reported that he was subjected to electric shocks, and that his toes were crushed with pliers, as a result of which he suffered serious injuries to his feet. Hüseyin Yıldırım claimed that he had been forced to eat human excrement, to drink urine and petrol and that while bound, his hands and feet had been burned. Mehmet Özkan and Abdulhamit Demir reported in their statement to the prosecutor that they heard one of the villagers, İbrahim Ekinci, being severely tortured and that he went into a coma. He died, apparently as a result of the torture, in Diyarbakır State Hospital on 17 March. Reportedly a local official told the family that the death was due to "unknown causes" and that tissue samples had been taken for further investigation. Photographs of the body show injuries to his head and frostbite on his feet.

Water was poured on the concrete floor as a result of which the villagers' bare feet, already

injured from *falaka* (beating on the soles of the feet), were frozen to the floor where they stood, and their sides froze to the floor when they lay down to sleep. As a result, many of them suffered severe frostbite which subsequently became gangrenous. Because the villagers later dispersed to various hospitals, to various cities in Turkey and some were sent to prison, it has not yet been possible to establish the precise extent of injuries suffered by all the detainees. However, both of İbrahim Ekin's big toes were amputated, and a large proportion of both of Resul Aslan's feet were amputated. In the case of Fahrettin Özkan (17) all his toes were amputated. Mehmet Tahil Çetin's

*The effects of falaka and frostbite on Resul Aslan's feet*

leg was amputated from the knee down in Diyarbakır Military Hospital.

Most of the detainees were brought before a judge on 2 April 1993. Ormaniçi's *muhtar* Mehmet Aslan, Zeki Çetin, Semsettin Erbek, Ali Erbek, Hacı Ekin, Osman Ekinci, Cemal Sezgin, Mehmet Nuri Özkan and Ibrahim Özkan are still remanded in custody in Diyarbakır prison. Seventeen of the villagers have been indicted on various charges including resisting the armed forces, membership of an armed organization and illegal possession of firearms. Three unlicensed weapons were recovered - two from inside the village, one from a hiding place outside. The prosecutor is demanding the death penalty for 14 of the villagers.

On 20 May Amnesty International wrote to the Turkish Government concerning the events at Ormaniçi but had received no reply by 1 July 1993.

As in the case cited above such operations frequently involve the gratuitous and punitive destruction of houses, and persistent refusal to join the village guard system frequently results in complete evacuation of the village. In recent years, hundreds of villages in southeast Turkey have been emptied and destroyed. Two days after an attack by guerrillas of the PKK on the gendarmerie post at the village of Görümlü, near Silopi in the province of Mardin on 12 June, the nearby village of Selçik (Kurdish name: Dereder) was raided by gendarmerie. According to an official complaint made by the villagers, they were insulted but not subjected to physical ill-treatment. However, the

population was gathered by the village well while all the houses bar one were completely burned, together with furniture and food stores.

It is clear from news and testimony which have reached Amnesty International in recent days that such security operations directed towards villages are being stepped up.

On 21 June several hundred soldiers and special team members entered the village of Orta\_ar, near Ç\_nar in the province of Diyarbak\_r, assembled the male and female villagers outside the primary school, made them lie face down and told them that if they moved they would be killed. According to an account received by Amnesty International the soldiers began hitting the villagers with the butts of their weapons. Electric cables attached to the armoured vehicles were used to give the villagers electric shocks, and cigarettes were stubbed out on them. Women and children were beaten. This reportedly continued all day until 10.30pm. Some villagers were detained - two of whom were released the following day and returned to the village "in an unrecognizable state" due to ill-treatment. The villagers of Orta\_ar have refused to join the village guard militia. On 25 June, gendarmes visited the villagers again and threatened to kill them if they made any complaint to the newspapers or the local human rights organization. By 1 July four of the villagers were still being interrogated in police custody.

The latest security operations have apparently already claimed one victim as a result of brutal treatment. According to newspaper reports, gendarmes arrived at the village of Mala M\_he Biro, near Lice in Diyarbak\_r province, on 12 June in armoured vehicles, gathered the villagers in the square, and began beating them with sticks, while asking them if they were sheltering guerrillas. As a result, 75-year-old Ahmet Aydemir fell to the ground. Gendarmes checked his pulse, and when they realised that he was dead, left the village.

### *Torture, death in custody and "disappearance"*

Where villagers are taken away for extended detention in the custody of police and gendarmerie, they are at even greater risk of torture. During 1992 at least twelve people died in custody apparently as a result of torture during the course of such police operations in southeast Turkey. Amnesty International has frequently written to the government expressing its strong opposition to the terms under which detainees can be held throughout the country, but particularly in the southeast, where detainees are held unprotected by even the most rudimentary safeguards against torture, death in custody and "disappearance". The measures introduced in November 1992 and widely publicized by the government as a "judicial reform" in fact stripped such detainees of their theoretical right to consult legal counsel during interrogation - a right which had never been observed. The maximum term of police custody for political detainees in the region under emergency legislation is 30 days (twice that in the rest of the country), seven times as long as the four days and six hours which was declared by the European Court of Human Rights<sup>2</sup> as being in violation of the requirement that detainees should be brought "promptly" before a judge under Article 5(3) of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms to which Turkey is a state party.

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<sup>2</sup> Case of Brogan and others [10/1987/133/184-187, 29 November 1988]

When arrests and detentions are carried out by village guards the risks for the detainees are further increased. Village guards are frequently illiterate or semi-literate, with an ill-defined (often tribal) command structure. These heavily-armed paramilitary forces may be involved in legitimate defence activities, but it is clear that they are also able to act with a great deal of impunity in carrying out non-legitimate reprisal raids on neighbouring civilian populations, or subjecting neighbouring populations to extortion. It is therefore clearly inappropriate that village guards should be permitted to hold or interrogate detainees, as is illustrated by the death of \_brahim Dilek in the custody of village guards. According to newspaper reports, on 20 March 1993 the village of Bar\_\_tepe in Mardin province was raided by gendarmes and village guards. \_brahim Dilek, who had previously been threatened for refusing to join the village guard militia, and his son Selahattin Dilek, were detained. The son was released after three days, but on 30 March \_brahim Dilek's weighted body was found in a well two kilometres from Yola\_z\_ village where there is a military post. The prosecutor's autopsy report stated: "There were marks of beating with the intention of torture covering almost the entire body. There were also rope marks on both arms consistent with being dragged and the body showed marks from dragging. The anal area was torn, suggesting that a hard object had been inserted as a method of torture, and from the general appearance of the body it was quite clear that torture had taken place." The cause of death was noted as respiratory and circulatory failure brought about by a blow on the head with a blunt object.

There have also been cases of "disappearance" in southeast Turkey. Ahmet \_ahin was detained as he walked into Hazro on 18 March 1993 and after four days was reportedly transferred to Lice Gendarmerie Headquarters. The family received no information concerning Ahmet \_ahin's whereabouts and applied to the authorities. On 20 April they received a reply from Diyarbak\_r State Security Court prosecutor stating that Ahmet \_ahin had been detained on suspicion of harbouring and assisting members of an illegal organization, but was released by Lice Public Prosecutor on 27 March 1993. This would be an unusual release date since it fell on a Saturday during the religious festival marking the end of the holy month of Ramazan.

*Ahmet \_ahin "disappeared" in March 1993*

Ahmet \_ahin did not reappear, though an inhabitant of Oyuklu village, whose identity is known to Amnesty International, reportedly claims that he saw Ahmet \_ahin being brought out of Lice Gendarmerie Headquarters and put in a minibus at about 8.30am on 10 April, and that when asked about the destination of the minibus, the gendarmes said that it was going to Diyarbak\_r. On 13 April, gendarmes accompanied by a lieutenant from Lice Gendarmerie headquarters reportedly came to Oyuklu village and searched Ahmet \_ahin's house causing considerable damage to property and smashing the windows. Amnesty International wrote to the Turkish authorities on 26 April noting that there were grounds for believing that Ahmet \_ahin was still in custody and asking

that urgent inquiries be made as to his whereabouts. By 1 July the Turkish authorities had not responded to this letter.

During the course of increased security operations in the last few days large numbers of detentions have been reported in rural and urban areas. According to a press report, S\_ddd\_k Katan, detained from Gümü\_örgü village, near Kozluk, Batman, stated that he was interrogated under torture for 14 days at Batman Police Headquarters and that as a result he had widespread injuries, including a broken foot. There have already been two alleged deaths in custody: Veysi Kaymaz was detained by the security forces on 11 June from Karaköprü village near Ç\_nar in the province of Diyarbak\_r. His dead body was found several days later and taken to the morgue of Diyarbak\_r State Hospital. Relatives state that they have not been given the results of his autopsy, but claim that his head had apparently been struck with a sharp object, and that his toenails had been torn out. The family were told by officials that Veysi Kaymaz died after jumping from an armoured vehicle in which he was being transferred. In another case, Abdüsselam Orak was detained from the village of Anadere in Tatvan, Bitlis on 10 June for possession of an unlicensed weapon and interrogated at Tatvan Gendarmerie command until 20 June when he was transferred to Diyarbak\_r State Hospital where he died on 23 June. Reportedly there were signs of blows on the back of his head.

Amnesty International's grave fear is that such operations carried out in the absence of any human rights safeguards by units who have a documented record of torturing and ill-treating villagers will result in further torture and death in custody, and that there will be further extrajudicial executions in rural and urban areas.

### *Renewed allegations of extrajudicial execution*

In the early summer of 1991 Amnesty International began to receive an increasing number of reports of extrajudicial killing. During 1992 there were over 400 political killings - and over a hundred in the first three months of 1993. Many of the victims were critics or opponents of the government. These killings show two clear patterns, described in detail in Amnesty International's publication *Turkey: Walls of Glass* (AI Index: EUR 44/75/92).

In rural areas villagers who have refused to join the village guard system have been targeted by village guards or other members of the security forces and killed. In urban areas, people whose relatives have joined the guerrillas, people who have been arrested for supporting the PKK or being a member of the PKK, and people who work for political parties or newspapers which oppose government policy in the southeast are shot down in the street by unknown assassins - frequently not far from police stations or other security installations. There is now a considerable amount of circumstantial evidence suggesting that security forces are colluding with or protecting such assassins - and in at least one case, clear proof. Such killings, which virtually halted during the cease-fire, have resumed.

On 14 June 1993 Ha\_im Ya\_a, a news vendor who had previously been threatened by the police for selling newspapers which opposed government policy in southeast Turkey, was killed there by unknown persons with three shots to his head. His nephew E\_ref Ya\_a, married with three children, was the owner of a kiosk in the Ofis district of Diyarbak\_r. He claims that in 1992 he was threatened verbally by the police who demanded that he should stop selling separatist publications. On 15 November 1992 his kiosk was burned down. He was then detained and interrogated by the

police who allegedly told him, "You should not have been brought here. The person who brought you does not know who you are. Next time we will bring you in another way..."

On 15 January 1993, E\_ref Ya\_a was shot in the street by unknown persons, some 500 metres from the Mardin Gate Police Station. Although hit by eight bullets, he survived the attack. "I was going to the shop in the morning with my son who was seven years old. He was behind me on the bicycle. I was about 300 metres from the Urfa Gate, and about 500 yards from the Mardin Gate Police Station, when a person drew a gun and shot at me. Another attacker was keeping watch. I did not recognize them. I fell to the ground, and my son ran away. Because I knew something like this was going to happen, I had acquired a pistol. I fired at the attackers but did not hit them. I was hit eight times."

A taxi that was passing picked him up and took him to the hospital. According to E\_ref Ya\_a's family, plainclothes police officers beat the taxi driver, saying "We will get you for this".

Later E\_ref Ya\_a was called to the prosecutor to give a statement. When he got there, he found that the prosecutor had opened an investigation against him for possession of an unlicensed weapon. He told the prosecutor that he had been attacked but the prosecutor did not seem interested. E\_ref Ya\_a was prosecuted for possession of the weapon and sentenced to a prison term, which was converted to a fine. He has appealed against the sentence. So far no prosecutor has taken his statement about the attack and it appears that no investigation was carried out.

Subsequently his uncle Ha\_im Ya\_a took over the kiosk which was raided by the police in March 1993, searching for weapons. They found none. On the morning of 14 June 1993, at 07.40am, Ha\_im Ya\_a was killed by unknown persons with three shots to his head, in the street 50 metres from his home in Diyarbak\_r. His young son was the only witness. During preparations for his funeral later that day, E\_ref Ya\_a was detained. He was allegedly beaten up at the local police station and later at Diyarbak\_r Police Headquarters where he was told: "You survived last time, but you should have been finished off. We will kill you next time. It should have been you, not your uncle." He was taken to the local forensic medicine institute branch where the doctor noticed the swelling on his forehead, but did not issue a certificate. E\_ref Ya\_a was then released on the morning of 15 June.

In rural areas village guards and special teams have been implicated in many killings, especially in the Midyat district of Mardin province where the village guards seem to be quite out of control. Often the killings are initially attributed to the PKK by local officials and the press. On 1 December 1992 seven inhabitants of the village of Hakverdi near K\_z\_ltepe in Mardin province were taken from their houses and shot. The Emergency Region Governor announced that the PKK had killed the villagers, but the surviving villagers questioned this and pointed out that though the attackers were dressed in guerrilla outfits, they had selected as victims the relatives of another villager who had been remanded in custody for two years on charges of membership of the PKK. They also expressed the view that because the area was under close security surveillance at all times, genuine PKK guerrillas would not have been able to escape without engaging the security forces. One villager stated "All those killed were [Kurdish] patriots. Our only crime is membership of HEP". A similar incident had occurred in April the same year, when eight inhabitants of Çalp\_nar village, Midyat, were killed and nine wounded in an attack on minibus. Again the Emergency Powers Governor announced it as a PKK attack, but ballistic tests later revealed that the weapons used in the attack belonged to neighbouring village guards, and ten village guards were arrested.

The Midyat area is also home to Assyrian Christians and to Yezidis, members of a non-muslim syncretist faith. Members of both groups have allegedly been killed by village guards. It appears that in their case, the intention may be not only to intimidate them from having any contact with the PKK, but also to extort money and encourage the communities to vacate their lands and flee to Istanbul or Europe. Yusuf Çakar, a Yezidi, was found shot dead with bound eyes, hands and feet on the morning of 1 December, after he was released from police custody in Mardin after 10 days' interrogation. On 13 January five Assyrian Christians and two Yezidis were killed in attacks on two minibuses. Although the attack was publicly attributed to the PKK, the survivors state that they believe the killers were village guards.

In recent days, the press has carried new allegations of extrajudicial executions by village guards and special teams. According to reports, special team members and village guards raided a house on the night of 16 June in the village of Oruçlar, near Pazarcık in the province of Kahramanmaraş, killing Mustafa Doğan while he slept. According to his wife Ayşe Doğan, who was wounded in the attack, she was woken by sounds in the early hours of the morning and saw an armed person in military uniform who told her not to move and to put out the light, whereupon the intruders immediately began to shoot. A neighbour reportedly expressed the opinion that the village was attacked because it refused to join the village guard militia.

### *Killing of prisoners and civilians by PKK guerrillas*

PKK members have also committed human rights abuses. In the past Amnesty International noted a clear pattern of summary executions of village guards and suspected collaborators - during 1992 newspaper reports recorded more than a hundred such killings. During the cease-fire this practice virtually halted, but after the disintegration of the cease-fire, Amnesty International began once again to receive such reports. In response to widespread criticism of the killings of unarmed soldiers in Bingöl by PKK guerrillas described above, on 8 June the leadership of the PKK told the press that the combat regulations issued to guerrillas prohibited the killing of prisoners or civilians, and that any person who carried out such activities would be punished. Nevertheless, the PKK have admitted responsibility for a number of such killings in recent days. On or around 2 June a group of approximately 50 PKK guerrillas reportedly raided the village of Yukarı Satıcılar (near Diyadin in the province of Adana), selected village guards Mehmet Kaya and İrfan Kaya and executed them.

In some cases civilians were killed after having been taken prisoner. On 15 June Ömer Baştürk, imam (prayer leader) of the village of Bağlarbaşı in the province of Tunceli, was reportedly abducted from his home by guerrillas of the PKK and shot dead. On 19 June three women, Gülsüm Aslan, Nerife Ekin and Hayriye Ekin, who had been abducted on the preceding day by PKK guerrillas from the village of Kuyular, in the Hani district of Diyarbakır, were found dead. On 21 June 1993, a group of PKK guerrillas reportedly raided the village of Tezelli in the Çemişgezek district of Tunceli and "executed" Nevzat Akdemir, a teacher, and wounded another teacher, Mehmet Öngül.

There have also been reports that civilians were targeted by PKK militants in attacks using bombs and incendiary material. According to an account given in *Cumhuriyet* of 4 June 1993, guerrillas attacked the village of Bahçebaşı, near Genç in the province of Bingöl and engaged village guards. While clashes were continuing between guerrillas and village guards, a PKK guerrilla,

apparently in another part of the village, allegedly poured petrol into a house and set fire to it - as a result of which Ay\_e Ta\_ and her baby daughters, Fatma Ta\_ and Emine Ta\_, were killed.

The PKK admitted responsibility for bombing the house of Mehmet Yalçın, a member of the SHP (Social Democratic Populist Party) as a result of which Mehmet Yalçın's mother and his 10-year-old daughter Devran Yalçın were killed in Suruç, near \_anl\_urfa on 24 June.

In the Turkish press, a series of bomb attacks on the holiday resort of Antalya on 27 June 1993 were widely reported as being the work of the PKK. During this attack at least 26 people, all civilians, were injured and it is clear that the bombs were positioned with the intention of killing and maiming civilians rather than to achieve any strictly military objective. On 1 July a spokesperson for the PKK speaking on German television denied responsibility for the attacks.

Just as Amnesty International unconditionally opposes the death penalty, the organization also opposes the killing of prisoners, the targeted killing of people who are not party to any conflict and the intentional killing of civilians using bombs, mines, incendiary devices or similar weapons. Moreover, such abuses are also specifically forbidden under Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 which establish minimum humane standards for internal armed conflict. Common Article 3 requires that persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of the armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed *hors de combat* by sickness or wounds, or because they have been captured, must not be summarily killed. Amnesty International has written to the leadership of the PKK urging them to ensure that all members of the PKK are clearly informed that they have a duty of care to their prisoners, and that the killing of any prisoner, be they civilians, members of the security forces or members of any civil defence force such as the village guard militia, is prohibited by international humanitarian law.