

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of Torture/Extrajudicial Execution

17 September 1993

TURKEY Families of: Daho Altunkaynak
Gevriye Altunkaynak
Hobel Altun
_abo Ayyildiz
Aziz Dayan
Yahko Dayan
Tuma Do_an
Maravge Do_du
Hanno Do_du
Gevriye Gögçe
Gabro Gögçe
Nuri Kaplan
Hatune Yalçin - all in Günyordu village

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of 13 Christian families in the village of Günyordu (Kurdish: Marbobo) near the Syrian border.

According to reports, a group of 20 to 25 men, armed and with their faces covered, regularly congregate in the village of Günyordu in Mardin province to intimidate and terrorize the 13 Assyrian Christian families still living there. The men are apparently village guards from the area - vigilantes armed and paid by the government to fight the guerrillas of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK). It is alleged that they hinder all contact between the Christian families and prevent them from going to church. Threats and harassment have apparently been continuing for some months, but have intensified during the past few weeks. As with many other villages in the area the purpose appears to be to drive the Christian families away so that their land can be taken over by their Kurdish-Muslim neighbours. Villagers allege that they receive no protection from the authorities and have reported instances where upon making a complaint they were forced by the security forces to sign a statement that all was well.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Twenty years ago some 20,000 Christians lived in the area near the Syrian border known as Tur Abdin. Today there are no more than 2,000, the rest having fled, mostly to western Europe. In January, five Christians and two Yezidis were killed and many injured in two attacks, allegedly by village guards. Later, four Christian villagers were detained, all alleging torture, ill-treatment, theft and destruction of property. Fear spread after a young Christian teacher was abducted, again allegedly by village guards, as well as some time later a five-year-old boy, who was then found murdered. The teacher is still missing.

In July Amnesty International published detailed accounts of human rights violations allegedly committed by various branches of the security forces including village guards, during security raids on Kurdish villages which refuse

to participate in the village guard militia (see EUR 44/64/93). Many villagers are reluctant to serve as guards for fear of guerrilla reprisals, but those who refuse are often subject to reprisals by the security forces or village guards who accuse them of supporting the guerrillas.

Amnesty International has learnt of incidents where village guards are alleged to have abused their powers with impunity for personal gains or the settling of old scores. According to these reports they have been responsible for destruction of property, extortion, abduction, torture and

page 2 of UA 332/93

extrajudicial execution. It appears that in the atmosphere of lawlessness under the state of emergency there are neither the safeguards nor the supervision to prevent such abuses. In its July report, a sub-commission of the Turkish Parliamentary Human Rights Commission documented gross abuses by village guards, and described in detail an incident in which village guards raided the village of Ormandi_i, near Silvan in Diyarbakir province and killed two people, later claiming that the raid had been carried out by the PKK. The sub-commission called for the lifting of the emergency legislation and the immediate abolition of the village guard system.

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

- calling for immediate steps to be taken to ensure the safety of the villagers;
- expressing concern about reports of unlawful conduct by village guards, in particular the harassment, threats and intimidation of 13 Christian families in Günyordu village, province of Mardin;
- noting that the sub-commission of the Parliamentary Human Rights Commission in its July report described gross abuses by village guards and called for the immediate abolition of the village guard system.

APPEALS TO

1) Deputy Prime Minister:

Mr Murat Karayalçin
Office of the Prime Minister
Ba_bakanlik
06573 Ankara, Turkey

Telegrams: Deputy Prime Minister, Ankara, Turkey

Telex: 44061/44062/44063 bbmt tr
42099 basb tr
42875 bbk tr

Faxes: +90 44 17 04 76 DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
+90 42 30 88 96 (attn: Deputy Prime Minister)

Salutation: Dear Deputy Prime Minister

2) Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs:

Mr Refaiddin_ahin
Ministry of Agriculture
Tarim Bakanli_i
Bakanliklar
06100 Ankara, Turkey

Telegrams: Tarim Bakanligi, Ankara, Turkey

Faxes: + 90 4 31 11 431

Salutation: Dear Minister

3) President of the Turkish Parliament (TBMM):

Mr Yildirim Avci

TBMM Ba_kani

TBMM

Ankara, Turkey

Telegrams: TBMM Baskani, Ankara, Turkey

Faxes: +90 4 418 76 01 and +90 4 419 16 64

Salutation: Dear Sir

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs:

Mr Hikmet Çetin

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Di_i_leri Bakanli_i

06100 Ankara, Turkey

and to diplomatic representatives of Turkey accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 29 October 1993.