

0001 hrs gmt Wednesday 11 November 1992

**£TURKEY: @TURKISH GOVERNMENT FAILS TO TACKLE
DETERIORATING HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION**

The new Turkish government has failed to fulfill its promises made a year ago to improve the human rights situation in the country – an unprecedented number of political killings have been reported in that time and torture shows no signs of abating, Amnesty International said today.

“There has been too much talk and too little action on the part of the Turkish authorities,” the organization said in a report published today. “The new government made serious promises on the issue of human rights, and in particular torture, but like previous governments, it has done nothing to stop the practice.”

The organization said that political killings are reported virtually daily and the security forces appear to be implicated in many of them. Meanwhile, hundreds of reports of torture of men, women and children have been received and at least 10 people have died in police custody allegedly as a result of torture.

In southeast Turkey, security forces appear to operate with almost complete impunity: during 1992, at least 100 unarmed civilians have been killed by security forces firing on peaceful demonstrations or randomly firing on residential areas in “retaliation” for attacks by the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK).

More than 50 villagers and local politicians were killed during 1991 in circumstances which implicated security forces. In the last 12 months, the pattern of killings has changed: more than a hundred Kurdish men - journalists, local politicians, members of the People’s Labour Party (HEP) and others - have been shot dead in “mysterious murders”.

The killings have frequently been attributed to a local organization called Hizbullah. However, many of the victims have previously been threatened, detained or tortured by the police and there is growing evidence to suggest that security forces collude in such killings and may actually instigate them.

Ramazan Sat was detained on 24 March 1992 and interrogated for 12 days in Batman Police Headquarters on suspicion of harbouring members of the PKK. He was reportedly subjected to torture and threatened by police who said: “The next time we will not take you from your house. We shall kill you in the street when nobody is watching.” Three months later, on 3 July, he was attacked by unknown assailants in a street in Batman and later died in hospital.

Despite repeated appeals by Amnesty International for the establishment of commissions of inquiry, the government has failed to initiate any form of public inquiry into the killings.

Torture, which has been widespread in Turkey for more than a decade, continues to be practised routinely in police stations throughout the country. It is during the long period detainees are held in police custody, usually incommunicado, that torture occurs. The proposals for reform which have been put forward by the Turkish government will not shorten the length of detention enough to protect detainees. Moreover, political detainees, who are most at risk of torture, are excluded from the planned legislation. Detainees have told Amnesty International that they were severely beaten, subjected to electric shocks and even raped with a truncheon by police attempting to extract confessions from them. Others say they were suspended by the arms from poles, hosed with ice cold water and

subjected to other forms of sexual assault while in police detention. Victims and their relatives who try to take legal action against torturers have been subjected to threats by police.

The human rights violations by security forces have taken place in a context of political violence. The PKK and other opposition groups have been responsible for human rights abuses, including the "execution" of prisoners and the killing of unarmed civilians.

Amnesty International strongly condemns these abuses - but they can never justify the violation by the Turkish government of basic human rights.

"It is time for the Turkish government to face up to its responsibilities under international law and bring perpetrators of human rights violations to justice. Too many people have suffered already - the government must act now to stop many more people becoming victims of gross violations in Turkey."

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