

**July 1992**  
**Volume 4, Issue No. 13**

## **TURKEY: HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST MURDERED; HUMAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION UNDER ATTACK**

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**Helsinki Watch is deeply disturbed by the June 20 killing of human rights activist Siddik Tan and by continuing attacks on the Turkish Human Rights Association (HRA) and its members.**

**Helsinki Watch urges the government of Turkey to investigate promptly and thoroughly Mr. Tan's death; to end its raids on HRA offices; to prevent the detention, torture and trials of HRA members; and to investigate the death threats lodged against HRA officers and members. Helsinki Watch also urges the government to bring to justice the killers of human rights activist Vedat Aydin, murdered in Diyarbakir in July 1991.<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> See Helsinki Watch newsletter "Turkey: Human Rights Activist Killed; Police Shoot and Kill Three at his Funeral; Human Rights Association Attacked," July 11, 1991.

## **MURDER OF SIDDIK TAN**

Human rights activist Siddik Tan was killed on June 20 in a house in the Hurriyet quarter of Batman in southeast Turkey. According to reports received from reliable sources, the murder was carried out by three unidentified armed attackers. Mr. Tan was an active board member of the Batman branch of the Human Rights Association.

Mr. Tan had been injured in an earlier attack on July 2, 1991, by a bomb that had been placed in his car. Mr. Tan's 10-year-old son and a friend were also injured by the car bomb; the car was demolished.

### **1991 Attacks on Human Rights Association Still Unresolved**

The July 1991 car bombing of Siddik Tan was one of four attacks on the Turkish Human Rights Association that took place during a short period of time in 1991. On June 18, 1991, an explosive device destroyed the car of lawyer and HRA member Mustafa Ozer. On June 25, 1991, the Diyarbakir office of the HRA was bombed, causing extensive damage.

The most serious attack during June and July of 1991 was the murder of Vedat Aydin, 39, one of the founders of the Diyarbakir branch of the Human Rights Association. On July 5, 1991, Mr. Aydin was taken from his home by several armed men who identified themselves as police officers. His body was found outside Diyarbakir on July 8; his skull had been fractured, both legs were broken, and his body contained 15 or 16 bullet wounds. To date, no one has been charged with Mr. Aydin's murder or with the other acts of violence directed against members of the Turkish Human Rights Association.

## **RECENT HARASSMENT AND ATTACKS AGAINST THE TURKISH HUMAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION**

### **Death Threats**

In early May, a leaflet containing death threats against 28 people was widely circulated in southeast Turkey. All 28 are Kurds; all are either members of Parliament or have spoken out on behalf of Kurds in Turkey; some have investigated human rights violations against Kurds. Four are members of the Human Rights Association:

**Yavuz Binbay, president, Van HRA  
Sekvan Aytug, president, Sirnak HRA  
Faik Tunefan, member, Istanbul HRA, and  
Omer Hazar, member, Istanbul HRA.**

The leaflet was signed by "Islami Cihad-B (Islami Yumruk)" (Islamic Holy War-B (Fist of Islam)).<sup>2</sup>

Ercan Kanar, the president of the HRA's Istanbul Branch, had reported earlier that the association's leaders were receiving death threats (*Cumhuriyet*, February 14, 1992). In May 1992 the national Human Rights Association reported that its branches had been subjected to such threats (*Cumhuriyet*, May 14, 1992).

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<sup>2</sup> According to Amnesty International, it is widely believed that Turkish security forces were responsible. (See Amnesty International "Urgent Actions," dated May 8 and May 19, 1992.)

## **Arrest and Torture**

**Sekvan Aytug, the president of the Sirmak branch of the Human Rights Association, was detained in Sirmak on his return from a trip to Ankara on May 14, 1992. Police did not disclose the reason for Mr. Aytug's detention, but he had recently provided information to human rights delegations and the press about human rights abuses that took place in Sirmak during *Nevroz* the Kurdish New Year, in March 1992.<sup>3</sup> His name was one of those appearing on the list of 28 people threatened with death, above. On May 29 Mr. Aytug was formally arrested. Sirmak HRA members who visited Mr. Aytug in prison reported: "During our visit we noticed bruises and wounds on his left eyebrow, feet and knees. Both his statements and what we observed indicated that Mr. Aytug had been tortured in detention."**

## **Raids on HRA Offices**

**The Istanbul HRA branch was raided by police on March 21, 1992; police seized documents and announcements. The same branch was raided again on April 24; membership lists and other documents were confiscated.**

**On May 14, the national office of the Human Rights Association announced that its branches had been subjected to raids, searches and closings in recent weeks (*Cumhuriyet*, May 14). In late May, the HRA's Bursa branch was raided by police.**

## **Trials**

**On February 4, 1992, a trial began at Istanbul State Security Court against Esber Yagmurdereli, Ragip Duran and Atilla Aycin because of speeches they had made at a September 18, 1991, meeting arranged by the Istanbul branch of the HRA. The defendants are charged under Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law with "making separatist propaganda." Each faces a possible two- to five-year prison sentence.**

**On November 29, 1991, six leaders of the Istanbul branch of the HRA went on trial at the Istanbul State Security Court, charged with organizing a solidarity evening for Iraqi Kurds. The prosecutor asked that the association be closed, as well as that its leaders be given prison sentences.**

## **Free Expression Denied**

**On March 21, 1992, members of the Ankara branch of the HRA were prevented by police from placing a wreath on behalf of *Nevroz* in Ankara Yuksel Street. Police destroyed the wreath, beat HRA board member Alpaslan Erturk and detained HRA member Yildiz Sik overnight.**

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**These attacks against the Human Rights Association and its members, and the failure of the government to**

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<sup>3</sup> See Helsinki Watch newsletter, *Kurds Massacred: Turkish Forces Kill Scores of Demonstrators*, June 1992.

**take action against them, are particularly dismaying to Helsinki Watch because of the new coalition government's promises in November 1991 to "accept the supremacy of law as an indispensable principle," and to assure individuals and organizations rights and freedoms that accord with international human rights commitments.**

*This report was written by Lois Whitman, Deputy Director of Helsinki Watch.*

*News From Helsinki Watch is a publication of Helsinki Watch, an independent organization created in 1978 to monitor domestic and international compliance with the human rights provisions of the 1975 Helsinki Accords. The Chair is Jonathan Fanton; Vice Chair, Alice H. Henkin; Executive Director, Jeri Laber; Deputy Director, Lois Whitman; Staff Counsel, Holly Cartner; Research Associates, Erika Dailey, Rachel Denber and Ivana Nizich; Associates, Pamela Cox and Christina Derry.*

*Helsinki Watch is a division of Human Rights Watch, which includes Africa Watch, Americas Watch, Asia Watch, Middle East Watch, and the Fund for Free Expression. The Chair is Robert L. Bernstein and the Vice Chair is Adrian W. DeWind. Aryeh Neier is Executive Director; Kenneth Roth, Deputy Director; Holly J. Burkhalter, Washington Director; and Susan Osnos, Press Director.*

*Helsinki Watch is affiliated with the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, which is based in Vienna.*