

## **TURKEY:**

### **Eight Journalists Killed Since February; A Ninth Critically Wounded**

Helsinki Watch is appalled by the killing of eight journalists in Turkey since February and the critical wounding of a ninth. All but one of these journalists wrote for left-wing or pro-Kurdish periodicals that cover the on-going guerrilla warfare in southeast Turkey between the PKK (the separatist Kurdish Workers' Party) and security forces. Four of the reporters wrote for *Ozgur Gundem* (Free Agenda), a journal that began publication on May 30, 1992; three of the four were shot between July 29 and August 9. These murders suggest an on-going campaign to silence the dissident press in the southeast.

In none of the cases has an arrest been made; moreover, there is little evidence that serious investigations are taking place. The government's attitude was revealed in a comment by Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel, who declared on August 11, "Those killed were not real journalists. They were militants in the guise of journalists. They kill each other."

The four most recent cases are:

- **CETIN ABABAY**, the Batman correspondent for the journal *Ozgur Halk* (Free Public), who was shot in the head at 7:30 p.m. on July 29 by three unidentified men while on his way home; he died in Diyarbakir University Hospital on July 30.
- **YAHYA ORHAN**, 30, the Gercus (Batman Province) correspondent for *Ozgur Gundem*, who was shot and killed by unknown assailants on July 31 at about 10:30 p.m. *Ozgur Gundem* reported that Mr. Orhan had been stopped on the street and threatened. According to his family, Mr. Orhan received a phone call at his home on July 31 in which he was told, "We have removed all journalists. Now it is your turn." Sounds of gunshots were then heard on the telephone.
- **HUSEYIN DENIZ**, 36, the Ceylanpinar (Urfa Province) correspondent for *Ozgur Gundem*, who was critically wounded by one bullet fired into his neck while on his way to work on August 9. He died on August 10. Mr. Deniz was also the regional correspondent for the daily, *Cumhuriyet*.
- **BURHAN KARADENIZ**, 19, a Diyarbakir correspondent for *Ozgur Gundem*, who was critically wounded by a bullet in his neck fired by unknown persons on August 5 in Diyarbakir; he is paralyzed below the waist. Mr. Karadeniz had been detained by police for five days following the visit of several HEP (People's Labor Party) deputies to Diyarbakir on July 10 on the anniversary of the death of Vedat Aydin, a

human rights activist and HEP member.

In June 1992, Helsinki Watch issued a newsletter entitled: "Turkey: Five Journalists Killed; Free Expression Restricted." The five journalists whose deaths were reported were:

- **HALIT GUNGEN, 22**, a reporter for the left-wing weekly journal, *2000'e Dogru* (Toward 2000), who was killed in the Diyarbakir office of *2000'e Dogru* at 8:00 p.m. on February 18, 1992. The February 16 issue of the journal had featured a cover story on the purported relationship between the Hizbullah (Party of God), an Islamic terrorist group, and the counter-guerrillas, an armed force allegedly linked to security forces.
- **GENGIZ ALTUN, 24**, the Batman correspondent for the weekly pro-Kurdish newspaper, *Yeni Ulke* (New Land), was killed by six bullets fired into his back on February 24 as he was on his way to work. A *Yeni Ulke* official alleged that Altun had recently been threatened with death at Gercus Gendarmerie Station. Mr. Altun had written articles about the alleged activities of government-backed counter-guerrillas; the most recent had been published in the February 2-8 issue.
- **IZZET KEZER**, a journalist for the mainstream daily, *Sabah*, was shot and killed by security forces in Cizre on March 23, during violence that followed the celebration of the Kurdish New Year, *Nevroz*. During a state-imposed curfew, Kezer and other journalists emerged from their hotel waving white flags. No shooting was going on at the time. Kezer, at the head of the group, reached an intersection and was shot dead by security forces who fired from an armored personnel carrier.
- The body of **MECIT AKGUN**, a reporter for *Yeni Ulke*, was found hanging from a telephone pole near Colova village in Nusaybin on June 2. Akgun had been missing for three weeks, having last been seen in Nusaybin. According to the Anatolia News Agency, an autopsy showed that Akgun had been strangled ten days earlier. A statement found on his body saying that "he was punished because he was a traitor" was allegedly signed by the PKK.
- **HAFIZ AKDEMIR**, a reporter in the Diyarbakir office of *Ozgur Gundem*, was killed by a single bullet shot into the back of his head on June 8. Akdemir was shot at 8:00 a.m., fifty meters from his home in Diyarbakir. *Ozgur Gundem* began publication on May 30, 1992; reporters stated that they had received telephoned threats for several days—several addressed to Akdemir. Mr. Akdemir had recently interviewed human rights delegations visiting the region and had written about them, as well as about the workings of the counter-guerrilla forces in the region.

Helsinki Watch is deeply disturbed by what appears to be a systematic campaign to silence the press about events in southeast Turkey. We urge the government to take immediate steps to investigate these killings and to prosecute those responsible.

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*This newsletter was written by Lois Whitman, deputy director of Helsinki Watch.*

*Helsinki Watch was established in 1978 to monitor domestic and international compliance with the human rights provisions of the 1975 Helsinki Accords. The chair of Helsinki Watch is Jonathan Fanton and the vice chair is Alice Henkin. Jeri Laber is the executive director; Lois Whitman is deputy director; Holly Cartner is staff counsel; Erika Dailey, Rachel Denber and Ivana Nizich are research associates; and Pamela Cox and Christina Derry are associates.*

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