

TURKEY NEWSLETTER



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Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey

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Women continue fighting

FIGHTING TOGETHER TO END THE OPPRESSION OF WOMEN

*A message of solidarity
and good wishes to women
in Turkey from*

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Women the world over are discriminated against because of their sex. In few places, however, are women as oppressed as they are in Turkey — where economic, religious and political factors combine to suppress and exploit women. The British Government — together with the Americans — condones and supports the current regime because of Turkey's strategic importance in NATO. But it is important that women in Turkey know that this does not imply the approval of people in Britain. Although repression in Turkey is not widely publicised in this country, those who know about the economic hardships and political repression — are, like me, shocked and appalled. As this issue of *Turkey Newsletter* comes out around International Women's Day on March 8th, I feel that this is a particularly appropriate time to send a message of solidarity and good wishes to women in Turkey.

WE HAVE PLENTY TO FIGHT FOR!

Women in Britain do not suffer the same degree of oppression as their sisters in Turkey, but we have plenty to fight for! The economic depression over the last few years has made women's position in the economy more vulnerable — and this has been exacerbated by reactionary Government policies. A Woman Prime Minister has done nothing to improve the status and living and working conditions of women in Britain. In fact, the Government's callous "self help"

philosophy and the erosion of state services has increased women's burden in this country. Women in Britain are under-represented in all upper levels of political hierarchies, and are largely confined to low-status, low-paid jobs. Legislation to outlaw sexual discrimination and ban unequal pay — which aroused great hopes when it was introduced in the mid 1970s — has failed to achieve any significant changes in women's economic status.

Although women form 40% of the labour force in Britain, less than 1 in 8 lawyers and 1 in 50 senior managers are women; and women's average take-home pay (including overtime) is still only 66% of men's. As only 3% of our democratically elected representatives in Parliament are women, and this Government is more blinkered, misguided, ruthless and determined than any other in recent British history, it is clear that we cannot rely on Parliament to improve the status of women in Britain.

In May 1981, the current Labour administration at the Greater London Council came into power against a background of an entrenched economic depression, escalating unemployment, and increasing poverty and hardship wilfully ignored by the Government. Our manifesto promised to improve living and working conditions, services, and leisure facilities for Londoners. Although we have not yet been in power for 3 years, significant — and much appreciated — improvements have been

made in, in for example, our transport, housing and arts and recreation services. Indeed, it is a measure of our success in improving Londoners' lives — and directly opposing central Government policies — that the Government is so determined to abolish the GLC, along with the other Metropolitan County Councils which are also Labour controlled.

It is in one area in particular that this Labour administration contrasts most strongly with central government policies: that is, our commitment to challenging discrimination against women and ethnic minorities. The GLC has gone further than the Government's ban on discrimination: it has committed itself to implementing positive measures to promote the needs and interests of women and ethnic minorities — as an employer, as a grant-aiding body, and in its policy-making and responsibility for services in the capital.

The GLC Women's Committee was set up in May 1982. It was the first of its kind-but many local authorities in London and in the rest of the country have now followed our lead. The aim of the Committee is to promote the welfare and interests of women in London; to encourage the adoption of policies promoting equal opportunities for women by the GLC and London boroughs; and to advocate the abolition of policies which discriminate against women on grounds of sex. In its short history, the Women's Committee has had a major impact on Council policy and voluntary sector funding in London. In a world where women very rarely command power or have control over resources, we have shown what women can achieve when we get together and fight for what we want — and for what we are entitled to!

So the Committee works to promote the welfare and interests of women in London, and we have had a major impact — but what do we do, and how have we affected the lives of women in London? The Women's Committee has three major areas of activity: grant-aiding; policy-making (including influencing Council-wide and other Committees' policy), and campaigning.

It is perhaps in the area of grant-aiding that we have made the greatest

impact on women's lives over the last two years. We have been able to give financial security, and the chance to expand to a great many projects which had previously been struggling on very limited resources and women's voluntary labour. Funding voluntary groups in London has enabled large numbers of women all over London to benefit from the services and resources they provide. Most of our grant-aid budget is spent on childcare projects: in 1983-4, 55% of our budget — £3.6m — was earmarked for childcare projects. This meant that by January '84 121 groups all over London had received funding. The projects include: pre-school day care nurseries, latchkey projects (for out-of-school care), creches, play-groups, toy libraries, play buses and holiday projects. The demand for childcare provision has been met only with a shameful silence by the state. We believe we can make a radical difference to women's lives by supporting childcare projects. These services mean that women can become available to work if they want or need to, or can find release from the childcare responsibilities to pursue other activities. But we don't find projects blindly: fully aware of the sexist and racist nature of the society

into which children are socialised, we give priority to groups with an emphasis on anti-sexist and anti-racist practices. In addition, we look for safe, stimulating and reliable childcare; the absence of corporal punishment; the integration of children with disabilities; proper pay and conditions of service, and qualified workers; the accountability to and involvement of parents; and evidence that neither parents nor staff are discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation. Whilst we acknowledge that we are funding projects which work within a system shaped by an unwanted ideology, we are determined that those groups we fund should challenge rather than reinforce the sexism which pervades our social structure.

Although our grant-aiding has been dominated by our support to childcare projects, we have a number of other priority areas for which we provide substantial support. These are Women's Centres; Resources/Information Centres and libraries; campaigning and research projects; health/counselling/support services; transport groups; and arts/ media/recreation groups. We particularly encourage projects which increase public awareness of dis-

crimination against women; which benefit black and ethnic minority women and women with disabilities, who suffer double discrimination; which are in deprived areas; and which are innovative and geared towards previously unmet needs.

The second main areas of work is policy-making. At each Committee we consider a number of policy reports written by officers in the Women's Committee Support Unit. These have covered a great many issues affecting women, including advertising, housing, training, low pay, immigration, health, black and ethnic minority women, and transport. But as every issue is a women's issue, we play an active role in policy-making across the board and often consider reports from other Committees and recommend changes in them. We have played a large part in the Council's policy-making on transport, and are currently working with another Committee to ensure that women's needs are given full prominence in planning the future of London. We are trying to avoid the 'ghetto-isation' of women's issues: women are *not* a minority, and problems which they face are *not* marginal issues. We are trying to educate and pressurise the whole Council into taking full account of women's needs at all levels and in all policy-making.

An argument often posed against supporting the voluntary section is that it both allows the state to evade its responsibility for the provision of services, and lets it get away with it, as the support prevents deprivation plunging to a level where it provokes public reaction. We think women in London need resources and services *now* — and so we fund groups who can provide them. But we are always aware that we are acting within a society which systematically discriminates against women in many ways. We are also surrounded daily by images of women which are unwanted, insulting, and sometimes liable to provoke violence. It is a world we want to change not condone. Because of our commitment to challenging the status-quo, campaigning is the third important area of our work. So far, we have had a major campaign telling unemployed women about their entitlement to benefits and encouraging them to 'sign on'; we have given major assistance to the campaign to keep the South London Hospital for Women open; and supported women campaigning for peace. This is an important area of work. We need to make people think differently — and it

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In a world where women very rarely command power or have control over resources, we have shown what women can achieve when we get together and fight for what we want and for what we are entitled to!

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looks like this is beginning to happen.

So far, I have concentrated on what we have done, but, just as important is how we have done it. Ever since the Committee was set up, we have tried to make into a reality the political idea that we are working for women in London. In all areas of our work, extensive consultation has been carried out to find out what women wanted and needed. And, instead of simply writing a report on our findings and forgetting them, we have really tried to integrate the results of consultation into our policy-making. In addition, we have tried to break down the remoteness and alienating bureaucracy of local, government. Right from the start, we have involved women from outside the Council: we have 8 voting and 12 non-voting members on our Committee who are women representing various groups; we have regular Open Meetings attended by hundreds of women: and we have a series of working advisory groups who work with our Support Unit on policy issues. We also have an 'open door' policy in the Unit, and women are encouraged to call in and talk to officers and take away our literature if they are interested. Lastly, but perhaps most important, we organised an exhaustive consultation process in 1983, involving more than 30 meetings across London. The aim was to find out what women wanted and what we could do in response. The lengthy report back is soon to be published so that it will be available for women in London, and we have used the report as a basis for planning our future work.

Since it began, the Committee has been working to improve services and resources for women in London; to raise the profile of women in London; and to raise awareness of the ways in which women are currently discriminated against and how this can be challenged. Although we've set ourselves a huge task, and we are fighting against the inertia of history, a world recession, and an uncaring ruthless and reactionary Government, I am very pleased with our achievements so far. On March 8th, we are opening our doors to women in London to show them what we do, and the groups we support. We hope lots of women will come and be inspired by what is beginning to be achieved. It will be a day when I, and others who know what is going on in Turkey, will be particularly keenly aware of what our sisters elsewhere are suffering. I send you my solidarity and support — and hope you will draw comfort from what changes are being achieved for women elsewhere.

The Progressive Women's Association in Turkey:

Using the experiences of the past as an example for the future

by ZUHAL MERİÇ

Zuhal Meriç was one of the founding members of the Progressive Women's Association (PWA) in Turkey. She was also one of the founders of and the first Editor-in-Chief of its paper, the *Voice of Women*. Because of a series of persecutions for her activities in the women's movement she fled from Turkey and now lives in the UK as a political refugee. In an interview with *Turkey Newsletter*, Zuhal Meriç explained to us the background of the PWA, the reasons for its founding in 1975 and the areas of struggle in which it was engaged.

There had been no organisation in Turkey on the basis of the woman question, either in the period of the Ottoman Empire or in the period after the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Many women's organisations were formed but they all remained within narrow circles, failing to embrace the wide masses of women. What is more, these organisations were only charity organisations.

Yet, women have specific problems which originate from the fact of being a woman. This is a question which has persisted for tens of thousands of years. It is the question of the exploitation of women.

The Progressive Women's Association (PWA) began its organisational work on this basis. It was established in 1975. We can answer the question of why it was established in 1975 by looking at the general situation in Turkey at that time.

The development of capitalism in Turkey had by that time made women more involved in working life.

In Turkey, especially after the 1960's, capitalism developed speedily. Production became further concentrated. Small enterprises were replaced by large enterprises. Large sections of the rural population flowed into the labour market. Exploitation of the workers and toiling masses further increased. As the social, economic and political crisis in

the country aggravated, social forces that stood against the deteriorating conditions of working people began making themselves felt in society. Mass struggles increased.

Women who participated in the social production and social life of the country took part in these struggles as well. Women workers joined political organisations and parties and began working actively in the trade unions. Women in villages organised land occupations.

If we briefly look at the education of women, we can better understand how significant was their participation in social life. 48 % of the total population of Turkey are women, 60% of women do not know how to read or write.

In 1970 the number of women in the legal professions was as follows:

Occupation	Number	Number of women
Judge	3,022	149
Lawyer	10,670	1592
Notary	266	30

The number of women who have had the chance of an education is so insignificant that it calls for attention. While we approach the end of the 20th century, and scientific and technological progress has reached such high levels, a large majority of women are left without education. Women are deprived of general education or occupational training. Active participation of women



in social life is hindered. In this way, confinement of women to the house, oppression and exploitation are perpetuated by the ruling classes. It is embedded in the consciousness of women that they are second class citizens, their place is at home, and their duties are childminding and housework.

As mentioned above, with the greater development of capitalism, increasing participation of women in working life enables women to understand that oppression and exploitation are not destiny at all. The ruling classes support the participation of women in working life as they provide cheap labour; on the other hand they see the potential danger of women siding with the working class. Consequently, they separate the woman question from its class and social essence, connect it to biological and psychological factors. As a result, the woman question is distorted, and channelled into wrong directions. Today, the women's movements that are developing in many countries regard the woman question as a man-woman question, e.g., a sex question.

In Turkey, the first organisation established to deal with the woman question, to give consciousness to women on this subject, was the Progressive Women's Association (PWA).



Women workers on strike

The areas of activities of the PWA were as follows:

1. Work to ensure that existing legal rights would be implemented, and the laws that make women second class citizens abolished.
2. That the labour of women be paid equally with male labour.
3. To get women actively involved in the peace movement.
4. Ideological-political education of women in order to involve them in the struggle for democracy.
5. That the state should protect mothers and the right to become a mother.

6. That children are protected by the state and provided with care.

The PWA began work with these objectives and established branches throughout the country. It managed to embrace tens of thousands of women in spite of the fact that the level of education of women is very low. Furthermore, a large majority of these women became, not only ordinary members, but very active members.

All progressive organisations were banned with the 12 September 1980 fascist coup in Turkey. However, aware of the potential women have, the bourgeoisie is now establishing women's organisations itself. It is striving to divert the woman question from its essence.

Tens of thousands of our women who participated in social life yesterday, are continuing their struggles in the prisons today. They are participating in the hunger strikes in the gaols and resisting the fascist practices which are being imposed on them.

The task of organising women is before us again. However, this time, we have the benefit of our past experience of organisation, experience which we can now evaluate, seeing its good and bad points. We will make use of and benefit from the experiences of the PWA, and take it as an example in our work.

OUR W MEN REFUSE TO

Zeynep Savaş worked in various democratic organisations in Turkey, taking part in working class and democratic struggles since 1977. While she was at university, she campaigned for academic and democratic rights. At the same time she was involved in the progressive women's movement working to impart consciousness to working and oppressed women to help further their struggle for their rights.

She is among tens of thousands of women who were arrested after the 12th September 1980 coup and tortured in the notorious centre specially designed for this purpose.

The following is the interview she gave to Turkey Newsletter.

Turkey Newsletter: *Could you tell us briefly about the women's movement in Turkey?*

Zeynep Savaş: The bourgeoisie in Turkey claims that women have been given equality as they were given the franchise by Atatürk in 1934. However, these few articles put in the constitution in fact legalised the unequal position of women in society.

The economic and social oppression the working class faces made itself felt more in the lives of women. As this oppression was combined with the exploitation they are subject to as women, they started taking an active part in the organised struggle against all these. Their participation in the Progressive Women's Association (PWA) was significant. While raising demands to solve the problems which originate from the fact of being a woman, they could see that a genuine and permanent solution to their problems could only be achieved as a result of the struggle of the working class for liberation. They have always been in solidarity with the working class. They struggled with the workers — men and women — shoulder to shoulder in the May Days, strikes, picket lines, barricades, etc.. Commemoration of 8th March, International Women's Day, became a tradition. Seeing the accumulation of discontent among women, PWA became the first democratic organisation closed down with the declaration of martial law in 1979. The fascist junta came to power on 12th September and immediately began mass arrests. The characteristics of the period that Turkey is going through today, remain the complete removal of every vestige of democratic rights and freedoms, and the widespread and systematic use of torture. Men and women are equal for the first time, that is, in the torture chambers.



Members of the Progressive Women's Association

Turkey Newsletter: *You are one of the tens of thousands of women arrested after the fascist coup of 1980. What did you actually do before you were arrested?*

Zeynep Savaş: I was a political person, so I was reading political literature. I was meeting like-minded friends. We would get together to discuss current political events or collectively read a book. In Turkey it is enough to warrant arrest for two people to get together and discuss politics, or to organise aid for imprisoned friends (books, clothes, money, etc.).

Turkey Newsletter: *Where did they take you when they arrested you?*

Zeynep Savaş: I was arrested in Ankara. Immediately I was blindfolded and put in a car. I did not know where I was going. After a while I felt that the car went down a kind of a ramp, and a roller type garage door opened.

I got out in front of the door and was led a few metres to the left into a place that was a sort of registration area (this I found out later on when I passed through without the blindfold).

Having left this room, I walked about 30 metres inside the garage, between the cars. I went down a single step and through a door which I had to bow my head to go through. The weak sound of screaming which I had heard when I first entered, became unbearable piercing screaming. I immediately realised where I was: the most famous torture centre known as the *Evaluation Research Laboratories* (ERL), attached to the First Branch of the Ankara Security Directorate. The ERL had been opened after the 12th September 1980 coup to conduct operations against progressive political movements.

I was able to observe the layout of ERL on various occasions later on and by various means. There are two roads along both sides of the Security Directorate building. The one side on the right belongs to ERL, is guarded by two armed

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carrying their banner at a demonstration

policemen, and only ERL personnel and vehicles are allowed. The road continues on a gentle slope. To the left is the garage door I came through. From the outside the ERL looks like a one storey building just behind the main Security building. However, in the basement are the cells and only the squad rooms can be seen from outside. Going through the door, bowing your head and down one step, is a long corridor where the torture chambers actually are. On one side of the corridor are stone cells measuring 1m x 2m. On the other side are the torture chambers (fitted out as shower rooms), a toilet and a door leading to more cells.

When I was at the ERL there were about 200 people. The cells were so full that some had to sleep in the corridor. We slept 5-6 to a cell on bare stone floor. Every single second of my 21 days at the ERL was spent under physical and psychological torture.

Turkey Newsletter: *Could you tell us about your experiences at the ERL?*

Zeynep Savaş: When I first arrived they made me stand on one leg with my two forefingers against the wall for one hour. If I tried to shift my foot or remove my fingers from the wall, they would beat me. I was on the point of collapse, my fingers numb from the pain and my head swimming from the screams and moans around me, when they dragged me into the torture room.

They began by kicking and punching me. Then they stood me up on a stool and tied straps around my wrists while I was in the crucifixion position. Then they kicked the stool from under me and my arms had to support my whole weight. The ache soon turned into an agonising pain. It was as if my arms would come off. To increase the pain they began to swing me to and fro. When they failed to get the information they wanted from me, they became very angry and more aggressive; they loosened one of the straps, now I was suspended by one arm. The pain was so bad, my screams were drowning their voices. However, I became oblivious to my

own screams after a while, at which point they took me down and dragged me into the pitch-dark cell. My hands were purple and my wrists were bleeding even though, in order not to leave burns, they had tied the straps around my jumper. In the cell my arm still felt as if I was suspended. After I was released from prison, a doctor told me that some ligaments had been damaged. Even now, a few years after the event, my left arm is slightly numb and has lost some of its mobility.

4-5 hours later, they took me back to the torture room beating me all the way. There they tied my left arm to a radiator pipe behind me. They tied something to the little finger of my right hand. Suddenly my whole body started shaking with the electrical shock. They continuously varied the current. When they returned me to the cell, I could hardly stand from the effects of the electrical shock and the previous torture. There were 5 other women in the cell with me. It was impossible to sleep from the endless screaming and shouts of the torturers. This in itself was a psychological torture.

While I was at the ERL, I had to be seen by a doctor since I was in terrible condition. However, on my return from the doctor, the torture continued.

Once I was again taken to the torture room. They removed my socks. They sat me inside a car tyre on the floor, pulling it up so that I was stuck. My body described a U-shape in the tyre, with my legs, arms and head sticking out one side, my back out of the other. They rolled the tyre so that my head was on the ground and my feet in the air, and began beating the soles with a thick stick. In other words, the *falaka*. I felt as though I would never be able to stand on my feet again. As I could no longer breathe from screaming, they stopped. In order to remove the torture marks and prevent permanent marks from forming, they walked me around the corridor. My feet were swollen for ten days, during which it was impossible for me to stand on them.

One time, I was again blindfolded and taken to the torture chamber. They tied my ankles. I thought they were going to hoist me up again. Instead they tied my arms, and one of them took down my skirt. They wet the inside of my crotch with water and began administering electricity. One of them shouted, "if you don't give us what we want, we'll continue to administer electricity to your ovaries and sterilise you." They were constantly varying the current. They continued this for about an hour. By the time they threw me into the cell, I was semi-conscious.

Turkey Newsletter: *You said you were blindfolded when you were tortured. This means you could not see their faces. But isn't there any way of identifying these torturers and making a complaint about them?*

Zeynep Savaş: In an effort to hide the identity of the torturers and the place the torture is carried out, one is blindfolded on entry and leaving, as well as, of course, during the torture sessions.

I found that, after a while, my sense of hearing had greatly sharpened because of deprivation of my sight. I would concentrate on certain voices and after sometime they became familiar. In this way I was able to recognise the voices of the policemen as they talked to me without the blindfold. I could also see the faces of my torturers at one session of torture since

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my blindfold came off. However, they became very angry and beat me harder for this.

Also some of the torturers came as witnesses to our trials, and we could identify them there.

At my trial I told the panel of judges about the treatment I had received and told them that I wanted to make a formal complaint against the prison administration. But the judges did not want to know. The law supposedly gave us the right to complain about these things in the court. However, the panel of judges did their best to shut us up. Then the punishment of the prison authorities for speaking out about the conditions would follow. Because of my speech at the court, I was confined in the cage and beaten up.

Turkey Newsletter: *The absolute denial of human and democratic rights in Turkey after the coup, and the widespread and systematic use of torture, created a deep concern among democratic public opinion in Europe in particular. Amnesty International and various other organisations including CDDRT sent delegations to Turkey. What effects did all this international pressure have?*

Zeynep Savaş: All this prompted the junta to exercise greater caution. Immediately after the coup, the fascists employed very crude methods against revolutionaries. Most of the deaths and permanent maimings under torture occurred in this period. But the rising protest of world public opinion brought them to their senses, not in the sense that they stopped using torture, far from it, but they did refine the techniques so that they were just as effective, but left the least marks. They developed various techniques. For instance, when applying electric shock, they would wrap the electrode in wet cotton wool to prevent telltale burn-marks showing.

In the beginning, the fascist junta denied the tortures altogether. But when it could no longer conceal the tortures from world public opinion, it engineered the trial of a few torturers. They tried to give the impression that they had no knowledge of these deeds and that a few torturers had been punished. These policemen were released after a short period of time anyway.

Turkey Newsletter: *Having spent 21 days at the notorious torture centre ERL, you were transferred to prison. Were the conditions better in the prison?*

Zeynep Savaş: On arrival at Mamak, I was kept for two days and nights in a cage outside A-Block. This was exactly like a lion's cage. They gave us only one blanket and we had to sleep on the bare stone floor. Two days later, we were allocated to the wards. The officer in charge demanded on our arrival that we obey military commands such as "Attention!" and "At ease!". When they saw that we were not performing these in soldierly fashion, they beat us.

The cover for the repression in the prisons has been conveniently found: "The prisoners do not obey the rules". The rules are: forced singing of reactionary — chauvinist marches, political-military drilling, enforced prayer, theoretical education in line with the junta's fascist ideology. Prisoners are not allowed to look around — even at the sky — and talk. I was beaten with truncheons for days since I refused to obey these rules. Visits from my family were banned for four months and I was deprived of tea, cigarettes, newspapers and books for 8 months. Exercise in the yard is limited to 5 minutes per day, and some days, none at all. The only ventilation in the ward was through tiny windows which they later fitted with iron shutters. Many prisoners contracted lung infections because, with 50 people a ward, we were virtually

suffocating. We were only allowed to write one one-page letter per week to our families. Anything over and above that was simply torn up.

Turkey Newsletter: *We all know that the political prisoners refuse to surrender to fascism in Turkey. They stage protests in various ways. Women prisoners also take an active part in them. Do you also have experience of any protest action?*

Zeynep Savaş: When I was in Mamak prison, we staged a ten-day hunger strike in protest against the repression and torture in the prison and for better conditions. During this protest, 20 of us (including myself) were incarcerated in the so-called "death cells" in the basement of A-Block. These were tiny stone cells, measuring 4 hand spans by 4 hand spans (about 1m2). There were three of us to a cell. It was virtually impossible for the three of us to squat at a time, let alone lie down. There was a small ventilation hole at the top and a drawer for a toilet. We squatted in the darkness, without food for ten days. We were determined to complete our hunger strike. And we did. When they let us out we were so exhausted that we could not recognise each other.



Women of Turkey fighting against the arms race

Turkey Newsletter: *Were you convicted after all this?*

Zeynep Savaş: Yes. I was convicted under articles 141/5 and 1402-17/1 of the penal code. I was sentenced to 6 years and 8 months heavy imprisonment and ordered to be placed under general security supervision for a further 2 years and 3 months, under article 173/3 and banned for life from public duty under article 31.

Turkey Newsletter: *Coming out of prison, what do you usually face?*

Zeynep Savaş: Even if you are not convicted at all, it is impossible for a person coming out of prison to find a job, since no one would employ you when they learn you have been in prison. If you are a student you are very likely to find out that you have been "expelled for having been arrested on political grounds".

Kurdish prisoners attacked

Ismet Karat, who was given a life sentence at a PKK trial in Diyarbakır, has been tortured to death. Following this incident on the 6th January, Diyarbakır Prison authorities, in order to break a hunger strike by political prisoners protesting against fascist practices and conditions, attacked and set fire to some wards in the prison. As a result, about twenty prisoners were burned and taken to hospital. Three prisoners died. However, during the autopsy it was found that they did not die because of the fire but from torture.

Keeping in mind the fact that the fascist junta massacred 35 Kurdish political prisoners in their cells in Diyarbakır Prison in 1981, it is clear that the fascists are trying to strangle the Kurdish liberation movement and break their resistance in the prisons, by actually killing their leaders in the prisons.

It is also feared that *Mehdi Zana*, the former mayor of Diyarbakır, is among the victims. At the last General Council

meeting of the CDDRT on 9th November 1983, it was decided to suggest *Mehdi Zana* to one of CDDRT's affiliated organisations to adopt. We now call upon all our supporters to adopt one of the following Kurdish prisoners who have died or are believed to have died.

- 1) MEHDI ZANA — Former mayor Diyarbakır. Tried in Liberation Way (*Özgürlük Yolu*) trial and sentenced to 24 years imprisonment.
- 2) NECMEDDİN BÜYÜKKAYA — One of the leaders of the "Association of Freedom for Kurdistan" (*Kürdistan'a Özgürlük Derneği*)
- 3) YILMAZ DERİM — One of the leaders of the "Socialist Party of Turkey-Kurdistan" (TKSP)
- 4) HALİL CARPAK — One of the leaders of the "Kurdistan Workers Party" (PKK)

What in fact happened in Mamak prison

The February 1984 *Turkey Newsletter* carried an article about the families of the political prisoners in Mamak Special Military Prison, Ankara, who started a protest action. In the same issue of *Turkey Newsletter* news was given that the political prisoners of Mamak were to wear uniforms. Both articles were translations of the news appearing in the dailies in Turkey. The following, however, is a letter sent from Ankara which tells the inside story, what happened in reality, but was not reflected and unlikely to appear in the heavily censored press in Turkey.

Pressure on political prisoners to wear uniforms has increased in the last month in Mamak. Existing political movements in the prison could not adopt a common attitude, Some prisoners wore uniforms.

The prison authorities forced the soldiers to attack the prisoners who did not wear uniforms. Their clothes were torn. Pressurised water was directed into the wards. Prisoners were taken out and were kept outside with no clothes, wet, in the cold for two nights.

That week, 150 prisoners who refused to wear uniforms were barred from seeing their visitors. On visiting day families who were not allowed to see prisoners were very restless, some started shouting. Meanwhile an interesting development was observed. Before, officers would intervene at once as soon as

the families raised a slight objection. That day they listened saying nothing. Families gathering together went to the Prime Minister's Headquarters. A group of six met the President of the National Assembly *Karaduman*. They asked for an improvement of the prison conditions.

In the second week, clothes taken off the prisoners by force were handed over to their families. Having seen torn trousers, underwear covered with blood, mothers raised their voices. One of the mothers started shouting; "If the clothes of my son are in such state, I wonder how he himself is". Consequently, the authorities stopped returning the belongings. Families went to the Prime Minister's Headquarters again. They showed the torn and blood covered clothes there. Officials became panicky. Extreme security measures were taken in the neighbourhood. Officials tried hard to disperse the crowd.

At the moment some demands seem to have been won. However the authorities are aware of the fact that the political movements in the prison could not adopt a common attitude, and that the families' action was not a wholly organised one. But their raised voice, even in this unorganised manner, was enough for the authorities to panic. They tried every method ranging between hardness and sweetness in order to suppress it.

The families' transfer of their reaction into action is an indication of great importance. The coming days are pregnant with more organised resistances. We will tear down their prisons around their heads.

Ayse Tezel, Ankara

Trial of *Liberation* (THKP-C *Kurtuluş*) has started at the Military Court Number 2 of the İstanbul Martial Law Commander. Eight of the 54 defendants are women, four of which are pictured right.



The following is an article which appeared in *The Observer* on 5th February 1984 and highlights Turkey's increasing involvement in the Middle East crisis and her recent more open siding with pro-American reactionary governments in the region.

TURKEY URGED TO BACK IRAQ

by PATRICK SEALE

TURKEY is coming under Arab pressure to commit itself to the defence of Iraq in the event of an Iranian breakthrough in the Gulf war.

Arab diplomatic sources report that, in recent high-level exchanges, Iraq, supported by Saudi Arabia and other Arab moderates, has urged the Turks to join in a 'framework of defence co-operation.'

This move reflects the Arabs' growing anxiety that Ayatollah Khomeini, now winning the war of attrition against Iraq, is determined to fight to the finish and will not be persuaded to negotiate peace.

The fifth anniversary of the Iranian revolution, last week, saw heightened tension in the war, with Iraq attacking commercial shipping in the Gulf and promising missile assaults on Iranian cities in a clear attempt to deter an expected Iranian offensive.

According to Jordanian news agency reports, Iran has massed seven divisions on the front south of Baghdad.

To have Turkey's support, even without the deployment of troops, would greatly improve Iraq's morale, reassure the nervous Gulf Arabs, and might just deter Iran.

Many Arabs hope that if Iraq is bolstered up with Turkish strength, it

will not feel obliged to use its Exocet-armed Super-Etendards against Iranian oil targets, an escalation which could set the whole Gulf aflame.

Turkey, a country of 45 million with 470,000 men under arms, is militarily far more powerful than either Iraq or Iran. It has, so far, been neutral in the conflict and has maintained good trade links with both combatants. But events may now be forcing Turkey off the fence and down on the Iraqi side.

The main development is an open Iranian threat to sever Iraq's only remaining oil export route, the 600-mile pipeline from Kirkuk across Turkey to the Mediterranean. An Iranian advance in northern Iraq would make this threat credible.

Turkey has already acted to protect this vital pipe, from which it draws oil for its own consumption and derives transit dues of £175 million a year. Last spring, with the Iraqi Government's consent, two brigades of Turkish commandos entered Iraq to mop up Kurdish guerrillas who had threatened the pipeline.

Since then, Turkey has continued to police stretches of the pipe on the Iraqi side of the border, and to build barbed wire fences and concrete barriers to

protect it.

Turkey and Iraq have also agreed to build a second pipeline to carry liquid petroleum gas along the same route.

What is now proposed goes beyond pipeline protection, although, according to diplomatic sources, it falls short of a formal defence pact. Two factors underline the present approaches.

First, Turkey would view with extreme alarm an outright Iranian victory which would overturn the regional balance of power and unleash unpredictable Islamic forces.

Secondly, the Arabs are understood to have made it clear to Turkey that continued access to Arab money must be matched by a Turkish defence commitment.

Thus the Arab world is offering Turkey a carrot as well as a stick. Turkey's new civilian government under Turgut Özal, which came to power last November, is heavily dependent on Arab trade, investments and construction projects to keep the economy buoyant.

Turkey is also considered a potentially more effective ally in the Gulf conflict than Egypt, the only other counterweight of size, could possibly be. Egypt is already helping Iraq with weapons and technicians.

Meeting on the situation in Turkey and its relation to Cyprus

On 17 February 1984, The Democratic Movement of Cypriot Students organised a meeting on "The Situation in Turkey and how it affects the Cyprus problem". A representative of the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey was invited to speak about Turkey. After her speech, Yilmaz Güney's film "Yol" was shown. Finally a progressive Turkish Cypriot talked about Cyprus.

The CDDRT representative, in her talk, explained that in the three year

period between the fascist coup of 1980 and the elections of November 1984, the generals changed completely the structure of the state.

They passed hundreds of laws concerning all aspects of life. As a result the new "civilian" government has very little power and even that is under constant threat. She continued by saying that with the elections in Turkey, fascism did not go away, the generals' junta is now called the Presidential Council. The unsolved deep economic

problems are still there. The working class and the masses face unbearable living conditions. Prisons are full of political prisoners resisting. There is an accumulating discontent among the masses.

However there is also a change in the social and political atmosphere of the country. Discontent is reflected in various ways and we hope and believe that this will be directed into the right channels and the people of Turkey will get rid of fascism once and for all.

**HUMAN RIGHTS
IN TURKEY**
through the eyes of
European Parliamentarians

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CONSTITUTION OF THE CDDRT

1. The name of the organisation shall be the Committee for Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey (CDDRT).
2. The aims of CDDRT are as follows:
End military rule, martial law, torture and executions.
Release of political prisoners.
Freedom for all democratic organisations.
End national oppression of the Kurds and national minorities.
Stop expansionism; end the occupation of Cyprus.
Withdraw Turkey from NATO and close all NATO bases.
No military, political or economic support for the fascist junta.
Totally oppose junta harassment of overseas opponents.

Organise solidarity on the basis of the foregoing utilising every means at our disposal.

3. Organisations and individuals accepting the aims of CDDRT can apply to affiliate. Such applications are subject to the approval of the General Council. Affiliation fees shall be set by the General Council and become payable from 1 January each year.
4. Congress is the highest body of CDDRT and shall meet every two years. It shall consist of delegates from Branches and affiliated organisations, and individual affiliates. Congress shall elect the General Council and consider reports and motions. The conduct of business shall be on the basis of Standing Orders approved by Congress. Pre-Congress arrangements are the responsibility of the retiring General Council. Each Congress shall decide the size of the General Council.

5. The General Council is the continuing body of Congress and shall meet quarterly. It shall appoint the Executive Committee which is responsible to it. The General Council shall have the right to co-option.
6. The Executive Committee shall consist of the General Secretary and such other members as the General Council may decide. The Executive Committee shall meet at least fortnightly and be responsible for the day to day work of CDDRT.
7. Local Branches of CDDRT are formed with the approval of the General Council.
8. This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds majority at a Congress.
9. The General Council may call, or upon request by two-thirds of affiliated national organisations shall call, a Special Congress.

CDDRT General Council

Bedir AYDEMİR
Richard BALFE, MEP
John M. BLOOM
Philip BRAY
Sandra HODGSON
Aif LOMAS, MEP
Aydın MERİÇ
Stan NEWENS
Ernie ROBERTS MP
Alan SAPPER
Marion SARAFAI
Faik SINKİLİ
Tijen UĞURİŞ
Marin UPHAM
Bob WRIGHT
and one representative each from:
Turkish Students' Federation in the UK
Union of Turkish Progressives in Britain
Union of Turkish Women in Britain
Union of Turkish Workers

Sponsors include

Peter Archer QC MP
Joe Ashton MP
Norman Atkinson MP
Tony Banks MP
Guy Barnett MP
Margaret Beckett MP
Andrew Bennett MP
Syd Bidwell MP
Roland Boyes MP
Ron Brown MP
Richard Caborn MP
Alex Carlisle MP
Dennis Canavan MP
Bob Clay MP
Harry Cohen MP
Jeremy Corbyn MP
Tom Cox MP
Harry Cowans MP
Stan Crowther MP
Ron Davies MP
Frank Dobson MP
Dick Douglas MP
Alfred Dubs MP
Alexander Eadie MP
Ken Eastham MP
Bob Edwards MP
Derek Fatchett MP
Martin Flannery MP
George Foulkes MP
John Golding MP
Judith Hart MP
Stuart Holland MP
Doug Hoyle MP
Bob Hughes MP
Roy Hughes MP
Lewis Carter-Jones MP
Robert Kilroy-Silk MP
Neil Kinnock MP
James Lamond MP
R. Leighton MP
Boh Litherland MP
Allen McKay MP
William McKevey MP
Kevin McNamara MP
Bob McTaggart MP
J Maxton MP
Joan Maynard MP
Michael Meacher MP
Martin O'Neil MP
Stan Orme MP
Bob Parry MP
Terry Patchett MP
Jo Richardson MP
Allan Robert MP
Ernie Roberts MP
Ernie Ross MP
Clare Short MP
Dennis Skinner MP
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Kenneth D Collins MEP
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Aif Lomas MEP

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Colin Barnett, Sec. NW TUC
Ken Brett, AGS AUEW
Stan Cole AUEW NC
Harry Conroy, NUJ
Lawrence Daly, NUM
J. Davidson, NW FTAT
Beryl Hufnily, Yorks & Humb TUC
E.V. Hughes, NW TUC
Alex Kitson, TGWU
Mick McGahey, NUM
Allan Sapper, ACTT
Bob Wright, AGS AUEW
ACTSS Central London Branch
APEX Holborn Branch
ASLEF
ASTMS Divisional Council 8
ASTMS Manchester HS Branch
AUEW Kingston District
AUEW N. Manchester District
AUEW Sheffield District
AUEW (TASS) Div Council 9
COHSE Caterham Branch
Fire Brigades Union
GMWU Burnley Branch
GMWU 22 Bury Branch
GMWU 115 Manchester Branch
GMWU Pendle 122 Branch
GMWU Warrington Branch
NALGO Met Dist Council
NALGO Hackney Branch
NALGO Southwark
NATFHE Leck

NUM
NUM Derbyshire
NUM Scotland
NUM Yorkshire
NUPE
NUPE Northern Ireland Div
NUPE West Midlands Div
NUR Manchester
Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance
SOGAT '82 LCA & EP Branch
TGWU
TGWU Reg. No.1
UCATT London Region
UCATT NW Region
Greater London Association of Trades Councils
Cambridge & Dist Trades Council
Gloucester Trades Council
Greenwich Trades Council
Hackney Trades Council
Kingston & Dist Trades Council
Leeds Trades Council
Cities of London & Westminster Trades Council
Preston Trades Council
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Union of Turkish Workers
Beckenham CLP
Bermondsey CLP

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High Peak CLP
Keighley CLP
Walthamstow CLP
Wigan CLP
Labour Party Young Socialists
National Organisation of Labour Students
Communist Party of Great Britain
Forening For Progressive Fr Tyrkia
Iraqi Students' Society UK (Branch of GUSIR)
KNE (Communist Youth of Greece) org. in Britain
Kurdish Students Society in Europe (UK)
Communist Party of Portugal (org. in Britain)
Union of Turkish Progressives in Britain
Turkish Students' Federation in the UK
City of London Polytechnic Students' Union
Cyprus Students' Society - Manchester University
Leeds University Union
UMIST Students' Union
Manchester Poly Students' Union
Manchester University SU

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Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation
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*Recently we received the following letter.
We publish it hoping that it will contribute
to the struggle of the working class against factionalist
tendencies in its ranks and further its unity.*

ANTI-TRADE UNIONISM AND FACTIONALISM UNDER THE GUISE OF SOLIDARITY

by ALİ YILMAZ
MADEN-İŞ DİSK

In the previous issue of *Turkey Newsletter* dated February 1984, an interview with the former Assistant General Secretary of DİSK, Aydın Meriç, was published. In this interview Aydın Meriç, while answering a question put to him by *Turkey Newsletter*, after severely criticising the top Türk-İş executive, stated that; "However, all these factors seem not to have diminished the role and image of Türk-İş in the eyes of the workers and the trade union movement in general in Turkey. The workers cannot carry out their struggle without their unions and Türk-İş is the only existing trade union centre for them."

As a reply to another question Aydın Meriç said that:

"Today, the workers are continuing their struggle in various ways. Regaining their trade union rights constitutes one of the most important aspects of the struggle. Therefore we must increase our solidarity with this trade union struggle that is going on. In particular, it is necessary to improve relations with the trade unions, trade unionists and progressive tendencies within Türk-İş, so that we help these organisations and individuals strengthen their relations with trade union centres in other countries.

"We must prevent the solidarity work with DİSK from being exploited or being made abstract. We can and must express our solidarity in concrete ways like going to the rescue of imprisoned DİSK members, solving the problems of political refugees and tackling the problem of *organising former DİSK members under the roof of Türk-İş*.

Solidarity work with DİSK must address itself to such concrete issues, otherwise solidarity based upon an abstract concept of DİSK which only survives in the minds of political refugees abroad, when in fact, *DİSK is*

non-existent in Turkey, will not do. And above all, political groups and individuals should avoid and desist from making such abstract propaganda their way of life."

Immediately after the publication of this interview, an article by Cahit Baylav, General Secretary of the so-called "SCTURDT", was published in a paper called "*Straight Left*". In this article, after giving some general information on the Turkish trade union movement, Mr Baylav put forward the following arguments:

1. "...Meanwhile the general's new constitution has so limited trade union rights that *many workers will no longer consider it worth joining a union.*" (my emphasis)

2. "...DİSK leaders who have managed to escape have called executive meetings of their unions abroad and are *still directing the activity of their rank and file* from outside. That includes my own union". (my emphasis)

Firstly, as if replying to Aydın Meriç's call for unionisation of former DİSK members this article of the so-called "SCTURDT" in *Straight Left* discourages workers from joining the only existing trade unions in Turkey.

Secondly, it is provocatively speculated in this article that the DİSK still exists organisationally and a small group of its ex-officials and ex-employees like Mr. Baylav are "still directing the activity of their rank and file from outside...", for example from London, Prague etc...

I will not go into detail as to the absurdity of these speculations, but for the time being I would like to raise some questions to the British labour and trade union movement.

1. While you are heroically fighting against curbing trade union rights in your own country, how can you in the name of solidarity sympathize with this

anti-trade union propaganda?

2. Does anybody in this country who has even a very little knowledge of what is going on in Turkey believe that DİSK still is *organisationally* existing?

3. Does anybody in this country who has even a little understanding of what trade unionism is, believe the nonsense about directing rank and file trade union members from London?

4. How, in the name of solidarity, could some trade unions and trade union officials of this country financially or even morally support these provocative and factionalist speculations?

One other reason that caused me to write this letter is the emergence of a new illegal publication in London called "*Gerçeğin Sesi*" and another one by the same "SCTURDT" called "*Dayanışma*". According to what is written in the publication of SCTURDT, it is financed and printed by a British trade union, namely AUEW-TASS, and also according to some rumours they are mailed by T&GWU. And this very same group has recently made use of NALGO premises for an anti-trade union meeting under the guise of solidarity with DİSK.

As far as I am concerned the International Trade Union movement, including the British Trade Union and Labour movement is faced with a very ingeniously designed trap.

A few ex-officials and ex-employees, now in exile, of a organisationally non-existent trade union organisation in Turkey are pretending that they represent something that really exists in Turkey. They would like to exploit the good will of the international trade union movement for their political groupings as well as use this good will as a means of making a living. The working class and the trade union movement of Turkey has not deserved that disgrace.