

Dear Member of the
European Parliament

18.10.1985

As Turkish Parliamentarians representing the three parties in the Parliament and the chair of the Turkish Mixed Parliamentary Commission, we wish to inform you that we completely disagree with all of the points raised in the Balfe report concerning democracy and human rights in Turkey. We find the assessments reached in the Balfe report unduly influenced by the negative propaganda of dissident groups in Turkey and in the EEC countries. The de jure and de facto level of democracy and human rights that Turkey has reached despite what had gone on before the 12 September 1980 temporary military intervention and what presently goes on in some of Turkey's eastern provinces provoked by outside forces should be better appreciated by our European friends. Indeed, we believe that despite the provoked terrorist activities and hostile borders, both the Turkish government and the parliament has taken courageous steps to reach adequate levels of democracy and human rights in Turkey. A brief enumeration follows:

Political parties which did not enter 6 November 1983 general elections and other parties that will be established later will soon find their way to be represented in the parliament; the press gives them full coverage while old political leaders enjoy much less restrained public talks and contacts.

There is truly no problem of minority rights but in the imagination of a small minority of minorities is the unitary Turkish state. The accusations concerning minority rights in Turkey are as farfetched as the accusation that a church had been torn apart in Istanbul! Both the government and the political parties are proceeding cautiously with regard to amnesty also bearing in mind, however, the majority of the electorate content with present political stability, the right to live and human rights. Moreover, the recent law on

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penitence should be considered as a radical step to attain amnesty in view of constitutional constraints. Although it is true that some mass trials carefully followed in European circles have taken long to finalize, this is simply because of the immensity of documents and the large number of suspects involved in these court cases. Torture and ill treatment of prisoners and detainees is in no way systematic and widespread and the government is very careful on this point. Those who inflict torture are brought to court.

The parliament has, upon the insistence of opposition parties, radically and successfully modified the new police authorities law; the reservations voiced in Turkey and in Europe on the draft should no longer hold now for the actual bill that has been allowed to pass in the parliament. In the meanwhile, there has been significant reductions in the number of provinces subject to martial law.

A number of so-called prisoners of conscience mentioned in the Balfe report and elsewhere are, in fact, being tried for their complicity in terrorist activities, hence should not be considered prisoners of conscience.

Moreover, the Turkish government and the parliament are resolved on their own accord to improve till perfection democracy and human rights as political and social conditions permit it, without, however, jeopardizing the long-run stability of the country. Such an outcome should be detrimental not only for Turkey herself but also for Europe and the EEC. Since these improvements are taken in gradual steps unfortunately there is little awareness and appreciation of these in many of the European circles; neither do they make much headlines in the European press.

It is most regrettable that while there has been definitive improvements since October 1984 when the European Parliament passed a resolution concerning Turkey, the relations between the EEC and Turkey seems

actually to have noticeably deteriorated. This deterioration is most regrettable not only in view of the actual improvements in democracy and human rights situation since, but also in view of Turkey's improved standing in all parts of the world but the EEC of which she is an associate member. Moreover, it will bode badly for the Turkish public opinion and lead to negativistic rather than constructive paths.

The Turkish parliament feels that it is absolutely necessary to keep dialogue open for frank and objective discussions between the two parties on specific questions of democracy and human rights as well as economic opportunities, cooperation and integration and thence to move towards normalization Turkish-EEC relations as soon as possible.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Turkish Mixed Parliamentary Commission,



Vice-Chairman

Mürkerrem Hiç

Yozgat Deputy



Vice-Chairman

NURİ ÖZEL

Eskişehir Deputy



Chairman

Ayhan ÇAKIROĞULLARI

Denizli Deputy

P.S. A detailed report concerning democracy and human rights in Turkey and a brochure on the new Police Law can be submitted upon request.