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Peace on Trial

Turkey VICIOUS VENDETTA CONTINUES

With the first anniversary of the "return to democracy" in Turkey this November, military authorities have cracked their whip once again by launching a *second* trail against peace activists. This is taking place despite strong criticism from Turkey's European allies over the vicious sentences passed in the first trail of the Turkish Peace Association (TPA) (see *Disarmament Campaigns*, No. 31).

Last November, some ten days after the election of a civilian government in Turkey and on the day the first cruise missiles were installed at Greenham Common, a martial law court in Istanbul passed sentences of between five and eight years hard labour for 23 executive members of the TPA. At the end of a 17-month-long trial by a military tribunal held under "battlefield rules," the TPA was found "guilty" of being a "conspiratorial organisation" and "campaigning to form public opinion against Turkey's military undertakings", i.e., U.S. and NATO nuclear bases.

Observers of the marathon TPA trial described Turkey's peace prisoners as a "Who's Who of Turkey's intellectual elite." The president of TPA, 66-year old ex-ambassador Mahmut Dikerdem, was nominated for this year's Nobel Peace Prize by the Socialist Group in the Council of Europe. The nomination was also supported by many West European groups. About to mark his second year in jail, Dikerdem suffers from cancer and has had an operation during his imprisonment.

Another legal odyssey against the TPA is set to begin with a second trial late this month. The trial will involve 48 of the TPA founding members, including such Turkish household names as humourist Aziz Nesin, and film stars Tarik Akin and Genco Erkel, as well as academicians and journalists. The most disturbing aspect of what has been dubbed "Peace 2" trial is the indictment of ten leading Turkish lawyers, including almost the entire defence team of the TPA executive.

The TPA was founded in 1977 under the auspices of the Istanbul Bar Association as a part of a European campaign to monitor peace and human rights issues in accordance with the Helsinki Accord. It is argued that the trial was set to kill two birds with one stone: to paralyse the TPA executive's continuing saga at the Mil-

tary Appeal Court and to purge Turkey's prominent liberal lawyers.

In moves clearly determined at the highest level, TPA lawyers are being disbarred and put on the trial stand as part of a recent clampdown on critics of the Turkish Regime. In August, for example, 56 leading academicians and intellectuals were accused of breaking the law by instigating a petition initially signed by 1,256 prominent Turks. Submitted to President Evren — General Evren until donning civilian clothes — this deferentially worded document called for an end to torture and the reinstatement of the "full range of civil liberties and freedoms which exist in the Western alliance of which (Turkey) is an integral part."

Some 3,200 Western intellectuals have supported this petition including former chancellors of Austria and the F.R.G., former prime ministers of Portugal and Denmark, leaders of the British Labour and Liberal parties, peace activist Edward Thompson, author Noam Chomsky and others. Meanwhile the authorities are also proceeding with the trial of the Turkish Writers Union (TWU), with the *identical indictment* as the TPA trials. The impending disbarment of the ten Istanbul lawyers has created serious problems for all those on trial.

The trials often bring up speeches and activities dating to the mid-1970s — before the advent of martial law in Turkey. The most common interpretation in Turkey and abroad is that a "hard-right" faction of the military now entrenched in power has made a successful bid to seize real and effective political control. With a

largely show-case Parliament and a "civilian" government allowed only a limited say in economic matters, it is argued that the military — unlike previous Turkish coups — is now there to stay and to reign.

Despite the fact that 178,000 people have been detained in the past four years following the coup and that 41,727 persons have been convicted of "political and ideological crimes," Turkey was admitted to the Council of Europe after successful lobbying by "Atlanticist" conservatives. The Reagan administration in particular has been lavish in its support of the Turkish regime with increased military aid designed to form a mini — albeit client — military-industrial complex to suit the country's enhanced strategic role as a U.S. deputy sheriff in the southeastern flank of NATO.

More international action is needed to exert pressure on the Turkish regime to honour its international commitment to human rights and to drop the vicious vendetta against the elderly and ailing TPA leadership. After all, if one member of NATO, the Council of Europe and an associate of the EEC can get away with breaking these covenants, what guarantee is there that they will not be broken elsewhere in Europe? If the European peace movements value their own liberties, they should value those of their Turkish counterparts.

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- Jean Furtado

TURKEY'S PEACE PRISONERS

We, the undersigned, are appalled by the savage sentences inflicted upon the executive of the Turkish Peace Association (TPA). Eighteen of the defendants received sentences of eight years' hard labour plus 32 months' internal exile for doing no more than campaign for peace in the same way as CND in Britain. The TPA executive reads like a Who's Who of Turkey's intellectual establishment. The country's best-known lawyers, professors, journalists, painters, poets and former social democratic MP's have been charged retroactively under Articles 141 and 142 of the Turkish Penal Code borrowed from Mussolini's Italy. Their average age is 50. They have jointly served the Turkish state in top jobs for a total of 406 years. For the President of the TPA, former Ambassador Dikerdem, this is an effective death sentence since he is 68 and suffering from cancer. Turkey is a member of NATO, the Council of Europe and an associate of the EEC. Turkey has signed the European Convention of Human Rights and the UN Declaration.

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