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13 October 2004

Turkey: The Human Rights Association (IHD), including its aims, objectives and its leaders; whether the IHD is associated with the People's Democracy Party (HADEP) and the Democratic People's Party (DEHAP); the treatment of IHD members and workers; the status of IHD branches, including which, if any, have been closed down; ways by which IHD members are identified (January 2001 - October 2004)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

General Information on the Human Rights Association (IHD) and Its Leaders

The Human Rights Association (IHD), headquartered in Ankara (FIDH July 2003, 21), was established on 17 July 1986 to "carry out efforts in the field of human rights and liberties" (IHD n.d.; see also *Turkish Daily News* 18 July 2001). The Association has been described as "Turkey's largest independent human rights organization" (AI 12 Feb. 2004) and its main activities are:

... to collect and verify information on human rights violations. It publishes monthly reports and press releases on arrests, torture, disappearances in custody, violations of freedom of expression and so on. The IHD also organizes courses for teachers and lawyers which cover, *inter alia*, procedure for the right of individual petition (Council of the European Union 15 Apr. 2002, 69).

Amnesty International stated that the association has been "outspoken in its condemnation of human rights violations and abuses [committed] by both the government and armed opposition groups" (12 Feb. 2004).

The president of the association is Husnu Ondul (AFP 26 Feb. 2004; *ibid.* 18 Jan. 2002; *Country Reports* 2003 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 4; *Anatolia* 24 Jan. 2003; *ibid.* 29 May 2001; *Turkish Probe* 28 July 2002; AP 23 Aug. 2001; *Turkish Daily News* 18 July 2001) and as at early 2003, Reyhan Yalcindag was the vice-president of the IHD (FIDH July 2003, 21). In July 2003, Feray Salman was the General Secretary of the IHD, but is no longer holding that position (AI 12 Feb. 2004).

As at February 2004, the chairman of the Bingol branch of the IHD was Ridvan Kizgin (*ibid.*; *Ozgur Politika* 5 July 2003; *Anatolia* 1 Dec. 2001; *Country Reports* 2003 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 4), while the chairman of the Mus branch was Sevim Yetkiner (*ibid.*; AI 12 Feb. 2004; *ibid.* 17 July 2003; FIDH July 2003, 22). Amnesty International also identified Baki Celebi as an executive committee member of the Mus branch in July 2003 (AI 17 July 2003). As at February 2004, Vetha Aydyn was the chairman of the Siirt branch (*ibid.* 12 Feb. 2004). As at May 2003, Cafer Demir was the chairman of the Elazig branch (FIDH July 2003, 22). As

at November 2002, the chairman of the Ankara branch was Ender Buyukculha (DPA 29 Nov. 2002; *Ozgur Politika* 5 Dec. 2001), although earlier reports indicate that the chairman of the Ankara branch was Lutfu Demirkapi (Anatolia 16 Apr. 2001; *ibid.* 6 Jan. 2001). As at July 2002, the chairman of the Diyarbakir branch of the IHD was Osman Baydemir (DPA 3 July 2002; *The Economist* 2 Feb. 2002). However, according to a 2004 Amnesty International report, Baydemir is no longer the chairman of the branch (12 Feb. 2004). The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) reported in July 2003 that since September 2002, the chairman of the Diyarbakir IHD branch is Selahattin Demirtas (FIDH July 2003, 21). As at April 2002, the chairman of the Istanbul branch was Eren Keskin (AP 11 Apr. 2002; IPS 8 Apr. 2002; *The New York Times* 1 Sept. 2001; Anatolia 2 Apr. 2001), although 2004 reports by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (HRW) both identified Keskin as the deputy chair of the IHD (AI 12 Feb. 2004; HRW Jan. 2004). A 28 July 2001 news item by the *Turkish Daily News* identified Saban Dayanan as an executive board member of the Istanbul IHD branch. As at September 2001, the chairman of the Adana branch was Sehmuz Kaya (Anatolia 20 Sept. 2001). Please find attached a list of all IHD branch offices throughout Turkey, including the name of the head of each branch. The list was obtained from the Website of the IHD and is not dated. More recent information on the leaders of the IHD could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

The Relationship Between the IHD and the People's Democratic Party (HADEP) and the Democratic People's Party (DEHAP)

A June 2004 report by HRW indicated that IHD members have been "drawn largely from left of center and secularist circles" (29 June 2004, 45). In its report to the Council of the European Union, the Netherlands delegation noted that "[w]ithin the IHD there is a very strong Kurdish current which maintains close ties to the Turkish-Kurdish opposition" (15 Apr. 2002, 69). In August 2001, the Associated Press (AP) reported that the IHD "frequently reported on cases of suspected Kurdish activists who have claimed they were tortured" (23 Aug. 2001).

Several news items indicated that the IHD, alongside the People's Democratic Party (HADEP) and the Democratic People's Party (DEHAP), has been involved in the filing of a complaint against the Justice Minister, Kikmet Sami Turk, in relation to conditions in F-type prisons (Anatolia 26 Apr. 2001), or high-security prisons that were opened in early 2001 (AI 16 Apr. 2002), and the staging of a protest meeting (Anatolia 20 Sept. 2001; *ibid.* 5 Jan. 2004). In at least two instances the IHD condemned the arrest of DEHAP members (AFP 5 Jan. 2004; Anatolia 17 Apr. 2004). Additional information on the relationship between the IHD and HADEP/DEHAP could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Treatment of IHD Members and Advocates

In 2001, HRW quoted Husnu Ondul, the IHD's president, as saying: "'[m]y people are detained or raided almost every day. We are living in some of the worst days in the history of the association'" (9 Jan. 2001). In 2003, the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF-HR) identified the IHD as a "target" for "persecut[ion]" (24 June 2003).

In late January 2001, Turkish police raided the IHD headquarters in Ankara and confiscated computer hard disks and documents because of allegations that the Association was receiving funds from Greece (AP 25 Jan. 2001; M2 Presswire 26 Jan. 2001; *Middle East Times* 26 Jan. 2001; Council of the European Union 15 Apr. 2002, 70). Both the IHD and the Embassy of Greece in Ankara denied the allegations (AP 25 Jan. 2001; *Middle East Times* 26 Jan. 2001; *Turkish Daily News* 27 Jan. 2001).

In February 2001, the Ankara Chief Prosecutor's Officer requested that the IHD be banned because documents confiscated during the police search indicated

that the Association was involved in activities that were not in accordance with its by-law and registered purposes (AFP 21 Feb. 2001; Anatolia 21 Feb. 2001; see also Council of the European Union 15 Apr. 2002, 70). During the raid, the police also apparently found 33 banned publications (Anatolia 21 Feb. 2001) and "fragments of spent bullets, shell casings and a mortar bomb tail fin" (*Turkish Daily News* 20 Mar. 2001). On 22 October 2001, the charges were dropped against the organization (Anatolia 22 Oct. 2001; Council of the European Union 15 Apr. 2002, 70). However, as at December 2003, the IHD's president, Husnu Ondul, and 46 other IHD members were facing trials (*Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 4). They were charged with the possession of banned publications, which were confiscated during the January 2001 raid (ibid.; see also FIDH 30 Nov. 2002, 3).

On 6 May 2003, Turkish police raided the IHD headquarters in Ankara again (BBC 8 May 2003; *Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 4; AI 12 Feb. 2004; FIDH July 2003, 21). This time, however, the raid was ordered by the Ankara State Security Court under article 169 of the Turkish Penal Code, for "'suspicion that the [IHD] Headquarters [was] coordinating a campaign to voice support for the terrorist organisation PKK/KADEK'" (AI 12 Feb. 2004; see also *Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 4 and FIDH July 2003, 21). According to the BBC, "[f]iles relating to the evacuation and destruction of almost 4,000 Kurdish villages in the 1990s were removed, along with investigations into the deaths of more than 800 people in security forces' custody" (BBC 8 May 2003). Amnesty International reported that "books, reports on human rights violations, files, cassettes, press releases and hand-written notes, as well as seven computers and computer discs" were confiscated during the raid (AI 12 Feb. 2004; see also FIDH July 2003, 21). In a press statement, the IHD stated that "legal pressure on [the Association] had increased in the last few years" (BBC 8 May 2003). Information on whether any charges were laid as a result of the May 2003 raid and whether any of the confiscated equipment and material was ever returned to the IHD could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

During the period of January 2001 to February 2004, various sources reported that telephone threats were made to IHD members (HRW 9 Jan. 2001; IHF-HR 17 Sept. 2001, 26-27; Council of the European Union 15 Apr. 2002, 71; AI 12 Feb. 2004; *Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 4), IHD offices were raided by Turkish authorities (ibid.; HRW 9 Jan. 2001; FIDH 30 Nov. 2002, 9; ibid. July 2003, 21; AI 12 Feb. 2004), IHD members were detained and/or arrested (Anatolia 6 Jan. 2001; ibid. 18 Mar. 2001; ibid. 20 Feb. 2002; IHF-HR 17 Sept. 2001, 26-27; HRW 2002; ibid. 9 Jan. 2001; ibid. Jan. 2003; FIDH 30 Nov. 2002, 9; ibid. July 2003, 21-22; *Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 4; AI 17 July 2003; ibid. 12 Feb. 2004), criminal proceedings were filed against IHD members (ibid.; ibid. 12 Feb. 2004; HRW 9 Jan. 2001; ibid. Jan. 2003; AFP 8 Feb. 2001; *Ozgur Politika* 20 Feb. 2002; AP 11 Apr. 2002; Council of the European Union 15 Apr. 2002, 70; FIDH 30 Nov. 2002, 9; ibid. July 2003, 21-22; *Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 4) and IHD members were allegedly ill-treated while in police custody (HRW 9 Jan. 2001; ibid. 2002; IHF-HR 17 Sept. 2001, 26-27).

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2003 reported that approximately 60 new charges were filed against the IHD in 2002, in addition to those already pending from previous years (25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 4). Between February 2001 and February 2004, over 450 new charges were filed against the IHD (AI 12 Feb. 2004). According to Amnesty International,

[w]hile such trials usually end in acquittal or a sentence which is suspended or commuted to a fine, Amnesty International considers them as a form of state harassment designed to intimidate human rights defenders and restrict their activities. It should be noted that the figures provided do not include the even greater number of investigations opened by prosecutors against the organization and its branches which do not result in a prosecution (ibid.).

A January 2004 report by HRW stated that IHD members Eren Keskin, Umit

Efe and Halil Dinler were convicted and sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment in May 2003 for "attempting to hold a press conference about prison conditions," but these, according to HRW, were "notable exceptions" since Turkish "[c]ourts have shown an increase[d] readiness to acquit defendants indicted for radical or unpopular but non-violent political opinions that would formerly have earned a prison sentence."

Charges against the Association and its members were generally filed for making public statements in protest of human rights violations (HRW 2003; *ibid.* 9 Jan. 2001; *ibid.* 2002; *ibid.* Apr. 2002; *ibid.* Jan. 2003; Anatolia 6 Jan. 2001; AFP 8 Feb. 2001; FIDH July 2003, 22), for staging illegal demonstrations (*ibid.* 30 Nov. 2002, 9; Anatolia 18 Mar. 2001; *ibid.* 20 Feb. 2002), for allegedly "aiding and abetting" the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), which has been identified by the government as a "'terrorist organization'" (*ibid.* 2 Apr. 2001; see also *ibid.* 30 Apr. 2002; HRW Jan. 2003; AI 17 July 2003), for spreading "'separatist propaganda'" (*Ozgur Politika* 20 Feb. 2002; AP 11 Apr. 2002), for being in possession of "'banned' documents" (FIDH 30 Nov. 2002, 3), and for using the Kurdish language or alphabet while performing the Association's activities (Anatolia 2 Apr. 2001; *ibid.* 30 Apr. 2002; DPA 3 July 2002; AI 12 Feb. 2004). For example, Eren Keskin, executive member of the IHD, was arrested on charges of "separatist propaganda" when she used the word "Kurdistan" in the statement: "'women in Kurdistan face harassment and rape the most'" (AP 11 Apr. 2002). In April 2002, 24 IHD members were investigated by the prosecutor's office in Ankara for displaying banners that demanded "'education in Kurdish'" (Anatolia 30 Apr. 2002). In July 2003, Sevim Yetkiner, chairman of the IHD Mus branch, and Baki Celebi, executive committee member of the IHD Mus branch, were detained for attending the funeral of PKK member Ismet Baycan (AI 17 July 2003).

IHD branches reportedly affected by such charges and/or raids include: Bingol (Anatolia 1 Dec. 2001; FIDH 30 Nov. 2002, 8-9; AI 12 Feb. 2004), Istanbul (HRW 9 Jan. 2001; *ibid.* Jan. 2003; Anatolia 18 Mar. 2001; *ibid.* 2 Apr. 2001; *ibid.* 20 Feb. 2002; *Ozgur Politika* 20 Feb. 2002; FIDH 30 Nov. 2002, 7), Ankara (HRW 9 Jan. 2001; *ibid.* Jan. 2003; Anatolia 6 Jan. 2001; *ibid.* 30 Apr. 2002; FIDH July 2003, 21), Diyarbakir (*ibid.*; DPA 3 July 2002; HRW 2003; Anatolia 5 Jan. 2004; *ibid.* 17 Apr. 2004; AI 12 Feb. 2004), Siirt (*ibid.*; FIDH July 2003, 21), Elazig (*ibid.*, 22), Gaziantep (*ibid.*), Mus (*ibid.*; AI 17 July 2003; *Country Reports* 2003 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 4), Hakkari (FIDH July 2003, 22), and Hatay (AI 12 Feb. 2004).

The Status of IHD Branches

In 2002, the IHD had over 30 provincial branches and more than 20,000 members (Council of the European Union 15 Apr. 2002, 69). In February 2004, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2003* reported that the IHD had "34 branches nationwide and claimed a membership of approximately 14,000" (25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 4).

The Diyarbakir branch was shut down by the government from 1997 to April 2000, at which time it was allowed to re-open (Council of the European Union 15 Apr. 2002, 70). However, the branch office was closed down again in May 2000, but re-opened on 11 October 2000 (*ibid.*).

Between November 2000 and January 2001, the Turkish government closed the following five branches of the IHD for their support of inmates who were on hunger strikes in protest against their treatment by the authorities while imprisoned: Izmir, Van, Gaziantep, Malatya and Konya (HRW 9 Jan. 2001; *Middle East Times* 26 Jan. 2001; *The Washington Post* 13 Jan. 2001; Council of the European Union 15 Apr. 2002, 70). As at April 2002, of the five branch offices that were closed, all re-opened except the one located in Gaziantep (*ibid.*).

Other IHD branch offices that were closed in 1999 and 2000 were Mardin and Bursa, but the Bursa office was re-opened on 26 November 2001 (*ibid.*). *Country*

Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2003 reported that in September 2003, the IHD branch office in Malatya was re-opened (25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 4). Information on whether all of the branch offices are open as at October 2004 could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, please refer to the attached undated list of all IHD branch offices throughout Turkey, which was obtained from the Website of the IHD.

Ways By Which IHD Members Are Identified

Information on the ways by which IHD members are identified could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Attachment

Human Rights Association of Turkey (IHD). n.d. "Human Rights Association: Information." <<http://www.ihd.org.tr/>> [Accessed 24 Sept. 2004], 6pp.

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