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Turkey: Investigate recent nationalist attacks

Amnesty International calls on the Turkish authorities to carry out prompt, thorough and impartial investigations into recent violent attacks by mobs targeting the leftist, Kurdish-rooted Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), Kurdish individuals and other groups and organizations for their perceived stance regarding the armed clashes between the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Turkish security forces. Amnesty International is concerned by victims' reports that the police failed to provide adequate protection against the mobs during what were in many cases sustained attacks, and calls on the authorities to ensure that it upholds its obligations to protect the security of its citizens in the event of any further attacks and to ensure safe conditions for the peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression.

Demonstrations across Turkey, some of which developed into violent attacks, protested two attacks by the PKK on 6 and 8 September 2015 in Hakkâri and Iğdır provinces, which killed 16 soldiers and 14 police officers respectively. The attacks are the most deadly carried out by the PKK since armed clashes with the security forces erupted in late July. On 8 September, a mob attacked the HDP head office in Ankara, in a sustained attack, setting part of the building alight and causing major damage before being dispersed by the police. The Governor of Ankara province stated that a group of approximately 200 people took part in the attack. While one person was detained in connection with the incident, the HDP claimed that the police did not intervene adequately during the attack. Numerous attacks against the party's buildings and officials have occurred across Turkey, including in the southern city of Alanya where the party's offices were set on fire.

Two attacks were also reported against party buildings of the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP). On 7 and 9 September, mobs attacked the Istanbul offices of daily *Hürriyet*, a newspaper that is critical of the government, after the President had condemned its coverage of his speech. According to media reports, six people were detained in relation to the attacks. Numerous other attacks targeted businesses perceived to be owned by Kurds and neighbourhoods with large numbers of Kurdish residents. Turkey's Prime Minister condemned attacks on media and political parties, however further attacks have been reported including against Kurdish construction workers in Bolu in the Black Sea region of Turkey on 13 September.

According to the Ministry of the Interior, attacks across Turkey have resulted in the deaths of two citizens, injuries to 41 police officers and 51 members of the public and damage to 69 political party buildings, 30 homes and businesses and 8 vehicles. The Ministry of the Interior stated that 310 people have been detained in connection with the events. The HDP, who were the main target of the attacks, reported that over 400 attacks against their offices, Kurdish businesses and individuals took place on 7 and 8 September, and that 126 of its offices were attacked in the first night of protests alone.

In the case of one death, witnesses suggest that on 6 September 21 year-old Sedat Akbaş was stabbed to death by a nationalist group in Istanbul after he was overhead speaking Kurdish on the phone. According to the lawyer representing the family, eye witness accounts suggest that he was seen running away from a group of attackers before he was stabbed. The lawyer also told Amnesty International that the family stated

they had been told by police officers at the hospital that the attack had occurred following an argument after Sedat Akbaş was overheard speaking Kurdish on the phone. According to statements by the six people detained by police, an argument that started while Sedat Akbaş was sitting outside their building led to a physical altercation and that he also had a knife. The family's lawyer told Amnesty International that the investigation documents do not include any evidence that he was carrying a knife. Four of the six suspects have now been released and two have been remanded in pre-trial custody.

Attacks on areas with Kurdish residents and on individuals perceived to be Kurdish have been widely reported in national and local media. According to media reports, Kurdish workers in the Beypazarı district of Ankara and in Konya reportedly came under attack by nationalist groups. Buses travelling to the predominately Kurdish east and south-east of Turkey were attacked, resulting in all but one bus company cancelling its scheduled journeys to Diyarbakır in protest on 9 September. A Kurdish farmer in Muğla was reportedly beaten and forced to kiss a statue of Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, by a group of local nationalists who had mobilised via social media.

Amnesty International calls on the Turkish authorities, while respecting the right to peaceful assembly, to ensure that future demonstrations are policed effectively and that mob attacks are not allowed to occur. States have a duty to protect individuals during violent protests, while ensuring that any use of force by law enforcement officers adheres strictly to international human rights standards. Amnesty International also reminds Turkish authorities of its obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to investigate any possible hate motive in violent attacks. In line with this, Amnesty International calls on the Turkish authorities to conduct prompt, impartial and thorough investigations into the recent attacks and to ensure that those who have committed an offence are brought to justice and sanctioned.

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