

PERCEPTIONS
JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

December 1998 - February 1999

Volume III - Number 4

HUMAN RIGHTS IN TURKEY*

HİKMET SAMİ TÜRK

Prof. Dr. Hikmet Sami Türk is State Minister in Charge of Human Rights.

Today we are inaugurating an important symposium organised jointly by the Istanbul Bar Association and Amnesty International. It is a meaningful coincidence that this symposium, which is held on the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is organised at the same time that we are celebrating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Turkish Republic. I trust this symposium to evaluate these two important occasions in the best way possible. Various issues pertaining to human rights shall be presented and discussed by academics, experts, representatives of non-governmental organisations and defenders of human rights.

The concept of human rights is not a concept that emerged with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is rooted deep in the past. However, it is necessary to point out that although human rights represent the rights possessed by each individual at birth and even before birth, it has not been easy to develop such a concept. Enduring struggles and suffering has led to the development of the concept of human rights. The suffering of mankind in one lifetime due to two world wars was acknowledged at the signing of the United Nations Charter following World War II. The founders of the UN pointed out that human rights was among the concepts that should receive respect and should be given priority in order to ensure that a similar degree of suffering is never experienced again. After the United Nations Charter was signed in 1945 and the United Nations Organisation was established, the General Assembly of the United Nations approved the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, that is, fifty years ago.

This Declaration, being different from other international instruments on human rights, is not legally binding for states. It is a document reflecting the common values and ideals of mankind. By contrast, the European Convention for Human Rights is an international agreement and has the force of law since it has been approved and enforced in accordance with our Constitution.

Respect for human rights is one of the most important, unchangeable tenets of the Republic of Turkey. The rights and liberties expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are not only an ideal for the Republic of Turkey but also encompass the rights and liberties that should be conferred upon each and every individual. The Constitution of the Republic of Turkey attaches great importance to fundamental rights and liberties, although due to the period in which it was prepared, the Constitution is limited to a certain extent.

The concept of human rights is a universal concept. The fact that today's symposium is conducted in at least two languages, is an indication of its universal nature. Similarly, today's meeting, organised jointly by the Istanbul Bar Association and Amnesty International, reflects this universality.

The rights and liberties expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in subsequent

international documents are complementary rights and liberties. When one of these is missing or is violated, the others suffer as a result. Therefore our aim is the realisation of these rights and liberties in an integrated fashion.

It is true that today there are some people who criticise the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for various reasons. It is claimed that the understanding expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reflects liberal western philosophy. It is said that this is not in line with the requirements and traditions of some countries. We do not agree with these views because the values denoted by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are values which have been attained as a result of century-old struggles, and which should not remain static, but continue to be advanced and improved upon.

Those who believe that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is not in line with the requirements and traditions of their own countries and who claim that it reflects the values of western countries, are the same individuals who would like to use this as a justification for discretionary, authoritarian and suppressive regimes. We do not share the same understanding. We consider the rights and liberties in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as superior values that should be fully available for each and every individual.

Realistically, we should recognise that human rights are among the most violated values in the world. Unfortunately, human rights are violated for many reasons: social, individual and psychological. If there were no such violations, there would be no reason to organise meetings like this one.

The idea of human rights is a system of values that should be permanently fought for. The Istanbul Bar Association and Amnesty International have conducted invaluable activities in this field.

The Istanbul Bar Association, as a professional organisation and in its capacity as a public institution, makes vital contributions to this field, both through its general activities and through the activities of its human, women's and children's rights commissions.

Amnesty International—although we have different opinions on certain issues from time to time—is acting as the watchdog of human rights in the world. Therefore, we can say that Amnesty International contributes a great deal to the prevention of violations of human rights in the world.

Human rights in Turkey were included clearly in national documents from the Reforms Decree in 1856 onward. In fact, we can say that in Turkey, as in any other country, both the concepts of a state of law and of human rights emerged at a moment when power was being limited and the rights of individuals against that power were being guaranteed.

Turkey has striven to safeguard fundamental rights and liberties in all the written Constitutions it has drawn up over the past 150 years. However, it is not enough to guarantee certain rights and liberties in Constitutions; we must practise them. This does not only apply to Turkey but to other countries as well.

There are two reasons why Turkey has not been able to reach a more advanced level in the fields of democratisation and human rights. Firstly, Turkey has had to fight a separatist terrorist movement for 15 years. Secondly, fundamentalist attacks against secularism, which is the primary value of the

Republic of Turkey and ensures social harmony among beliefs, religions and sects.

These two sensitive issues have brought with them certain limitations in the field of human rights. We are making efforts to overcome these limitations, particularly on the freedom of conscience, but to do so completely requires the elimination of the aforementioned dangers. Such limitations have been reduced step by step.

However, we have to reach a conceptual consensus with Amnesty International. Since terrorism is one of the most heinous threats to the wellbeing of the Turkish nation, it is of the utmost importance to describe the issue as such. Nowadays, Europe is being tested on this issue. Certain individuals, some non-governmental organisations and even Amnesty International in its 1998 report, define the movement that we consider to be 'terrorist' as 'armed opposition' and they draw certain conclusions in the light of this. Leaving aside the fact that the actions of members of separatist movements are condemned, they are nevertheless called upon to respect human rights and conform to the definition of humane practices within the prevailing code of ethics.

If you define a movement that is responsible for pain, suffering and the death of 30,000 people in Turkey over the last 15 years as 'armed opposition', then you are perceiving it as a part of the system. On the contrary, this is a movement which aims to overthrow the system; an organisation trying to divide the country, cruelly conducting all kinds of terrorist activities with this purpose in mind, without taking into account the young, the elderly, women or men.

In international documents, 'terrorism' is defined as violence or the threat of violence by a group or certain individuals in order to create terror or fear in a country, in its public institutions, among its public officials or certain individuals in certain groups, as well as in the general public. Separatist movements, extreme ideologies, religious fanaticism, unintelligible actions that have no grounds or simply completely irrational behaviour are offered as the roots of terrorism.

Now, when we look at what is happening in Turkey, it is clear that we are confronted with a movement that is in line with this definition. Then, why don't you define this movement as 'terrorist'? Why don't you condemn this movement as 'terrorist'? Why don't you reject it as 'terrorist'? If we cannot agree on concepts, we will be talking at cross-purposes. What is happening is not the voicing of innocent demands through peaceful means; it is terrorism. This reality must be clearly seen. Thus, it is necessary to evaluate the separatist terrorist movement that Turkey is confronted with, the organisation conducting this movement, its leader and its members in this fashion.

First of all, we have to end terrorism in Turkey. The Turkish Army has managed to curb terrorism to a great extent. Now, we have to ensure social development in the regions that have suffered from terrorism and transform the success achieved through military means into social harmony.

In its programme, our government has committed itself to the ideal of humanity expressed in both the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and various complementary international documents. It will take wide-ranging measures to convert such an ideal into reality. While uttering these words, I am aware of the fact that I am speaking as a member of a government that has received a call for a vote of non-confidence. Yet, I would like to say that human rights are at such a stage in Turkey that all future governments will include this issue in their programmes as a matter of priority.

Now, I would like to touch upon certain achievements during the current fifty-fifth government. In truth, a detailed description of such activities may last for half a day, but I am aware that the programme of the symposium is very intensive. Therefore, I would like to offer a brief summary of some of these activities.

There are at the moment two official institutions in Turkey that are in charge of human rights. Dr. Sema Pişkinsüt, the President of the Human Rights Inquiry Commission of the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA), is among the participants here. This Commission was founded in a special Act and it conducts essential studies in the field of human rights through the input of MPs representing a variety of parties in parliament. The Commission makes invaluable efforts to determine and uncover human rights violations.

The second official institution is the Human Rights High Coordinating Committee. The Committee, established by a Prime Ministerial circular, is comprised of the Under-secretary of the Prime Ministry, under-secretaries or their deputies of the ministries of Justice, Interior, Foreign Affairs, Education and Health. It meets under my chairmanship (as State Minister in charge of human rights) or that of the next minister to be assigned after me. The Committee, which invites other under-secretaries or public officials when necessary, has always assigned considerable importance to the establishment of dialogue with non-governmental organisations and institutions working in the field of human rights. Within this framework, the Committee has always worked hand in hand with major institutions, women's organisations, academicians involved in human rights issues, directors of human rights centres and major environmental establishments, organisations involved with issues concerning children, as well as non-governmental organisations.

Up until last week, the High Coordinating Committee convened a total of sixty-one times and approved approximately one hundred and fifty decisions. Some of the meetings of the Committee were held in various provinces outside of Ankara, such as in Diyarbakır, Muş, Edirne, Çanakkale, Hatay, Kars and Batman.

When you take into account the activities of the High Coordinating Committee, references made to human rights violations and torture may also be directed to recent developments on this issue in Turkey. The 1998 Amnesty International Report states that there are systematic torture and other human rights violations in Turkey.

As Mr. Evans, the Deputy Secretary-General, expressed in his opening remarks, unfortunately, there are violations of human rights in Turkey, as in any other country. However, saying that human rights violations are systematic means that human rights are violated as part of the functioning of the system, as a method, and as government policy. This is not true. No government in Turkey shall adopt or approve of the violation of human rights or the torturing of people as an objective or method. Our aim is to prevent any violation. Our task and duty is to respect human rights as embodied in the Republic's Constitution and in compliance with modern and universal values. We, as the parliament and government, are determined to carry out whatever is necessary in this regard. We are systematically working towards the protection and development of human rights.

In fact, human rights is an issue of such proportions that it is not just to be achieved by some ministers or some public officials; it is an important issue requiring co-operation between all non-governmental organisations and, moreover, all people working together.

The violation of the rights of any single individual is a violation of human rights. If you consider that there are over six billion people on earth, you might be confronted with human rights violations everyday; anyone might violate another's rights any day. On any day, a public official can violate the rights of a group of citizens. We all have a responsibility to eliminate human rights violations and to support human rights to its fullest extent. Such an understanding must be internalised. Therefore, as indicated in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we have to attach importance to education. We are making efforts to disseminate awareness of human rights and to make it a basic concept for each and every individual. That the discussion on human rights education follows this speech indicates the importance of education.

For this purpose, a course on 'Citizenship and Human Rights' is offered in the seventh and eighth grades at primary schools. This is a compulsory course. 'Democracy and Human Rights' courses are offered in high schools. There are human rights centres in various universities and human rights lectures. A human rights course is compulsory at the Police Academy. There are courses on human rights in preparatory programmes for civil service candidates. A portion of in-service training courses for public officials has been allocated for human rights.

We, as the state ministry in charge of human rights, have signed a protocol with the Turkish Radio and Television Institution in order to disseminate the concept of human rights to all citizens. In line with this protocol, Turkish Radio and Television will broadcast programmes on human rights. Through such programmes, we hope that each and every individual will adopt the concept of human rights.

Furthermore, we are implementing human rights programmes in prisons for the prison wardens and officials, and even for those under arrest or those serving a sentence. Through these activities, we want all individuals to adopt the culture of human rights because, to successfully implement the laws that I am going to touch upon in a few minutes, each individual must have an awareness of human rights. A change in mentality in this regard is the key to success. Illiteracy, superstition and intolerance are factors preventing the development of human rights. Similarly, the courts should be independent and fair trials, a subject which is on the agenda of this symposium, should be practised to allow the complete development of human rights, making human rights an issue that can be developed through the courts.

The recommendations and activities of the Human Rights High Co-ordinating Committee (HRHCC) concerning education are being complemented by an important institution. The HRHCC has established a national committee taking into account the UN General Assembly's declaration that years the 1995 to 2004 are to be the decade of human rights education. This committee is the National Committee for the Decade of Human Rights Education. The Committee consists of seven ministry representatives and four representatives of non-governmental organisations and four academics renowned in the field of human rights. Prof. Dr. İonna Kuçuradi was elected chairman of the Committee. This Committee shall discuss the measures required in the area of human rights education and the tasks to be performed.

We can summarise the activities of the HRHCC as aiming to build the administrative and legal infrastructure needed for the development of human rights in Turkey. Within his framework, some issues require the introduction of new laws or the amendment of existing ones. Some issues are carried out through regulations, circulars or other administrative channels as dictated by existing

laws.

In this manner, the HRHCC has devised certain draft laws. The relevant ministries and specialists on the Committee prepared these drafts and one of the ministries represented on the Committee co-ordinated them. After having been finalised by the HRHCC and approved by the Council of Ministers, they were submitted to the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA).

I would like to give a few examples of the draft laws prepared to date. One was the draft law on extending the limits of freedom of thought and expression. This draft law calls for the amendment of Articles 17, 159 and 312 of the Turkish Penal Code and Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law. It foresees improvement of the conditions of release on probation in Article 17 and redefines crimes in Articles 159 and 312 and in Article 8 of the Law on Combating Terrorism, in addition to reducing the penalties envisaged in these Articles. This amendment, The Draft Law on the Amendment of Certain Articles of the Turkish Penal Code and on One Article of the Anti-Terror Law, has been approved by the Turkish Grand National Assembly's Justice Commission and is still on the agenda of TGNA's General Assembly. However, certain developments following the preparation of this draft law have made it more difficult for us to reach the consensus hoped for in the parliament.

Another draft law foresees the amendment of Articles 243, 245 and 354 of the Turkish Penal Code. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, torture and degrading treatment are prohibited. Turkey has signed two international conventions, the United Nations and European Conventions on preventing torture and inhuman or degrading treatment, and has sanctioned international supervision set forth in these Conventions. Articles 243 and 245 of the Turkish Penal Code impose penalties on torture and degrading treatment. The Ministry of Justice submits regular monthly reports to the Human Rights High Co-ordinating Committee dealing with the developments in lawsuits filed under these articles.

The new draft law redefines the issue of torture in Article 243 of the Turkish Penal Code in compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment, broadens the scope of the crime and makes penalties more severe. For instance, the penalty for torture, which is currently a maximum of five years imprisonment, would be increased to eight years. Similarly, the penalty for degrading treatment by public officials who have the authority to use force would also be increased. The TGNA Justice Commission has increased the minimum limits for penalties by law. For instance, the minimum limit for torture, which was one year, has been increased to a minimum of two years, and the minimum for degrading treatment has been increased from three to six months.

Article 354 of the Turkish Penal Code is related to the production of falsified medical reports. The issuing of falsified medical reports by physicians, pharmacists and other health professionals is a crime and this article contains statements supporting the imposition of stricter penalties. For the first time, issuing falsified medical reports for the purposes of concealing torture or any other crime against any individual has been included among those issues to be punished more severely. Thus, new arrangements have been made to prevent torture by imposing stricter and more dissuasive penalties, and to label the rendering of falsified reports to conceal torture a crime. This draft, which has been approved by the TGNA Justice Commission, is on the General Assembly's agenda.

The TGNA Constitutional Commission recently approved another draft that complements the aforementioned draft law. This draft has been prepared by the Human Rights High Co-ordinating

Committee under the co-ordination of the Ministry of Justice. The name of the draft law is the Draft Law on Trying Civil Servants and Other Public Officials.

As we are all aware, civil servants in Turkey are still tried according to the Provisional Law for Trials of Civil Servants, which dates back to 1913. This law was passed in order to protect civil servants against false charges and allegations and thus to prevent a deterioration in public services. However, this law, which is slow to apply due to its structure, is also unjust, for it does not require those public officials in a position to pass judgement on accused civil servants to have a background in law and therefore, more often than not, does not yield satisfactory results. Civil servants accused of a crime are deprived of the opportunity to speak on their own behalf or be acquitted before the law. We occasionally encounter difficulties in bringing those in a position of responsibility before the court.

In fact, this situation is observed not only in Turkey but also in other countries. For instance, a study carried out by Amnesty International for the United States of America has been published under the name Shielded from Justice. In this study, it is indicated how difficult it is to bring a policeman accused of violent action to be questioned before the court.

We are introducing a workable system in place of the eighty-five-year-old Provisional Law for Trials of Civil Servants. In fact, according to the last paragraph of Article 129 of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey (which does detail some exceptions), in order to initiate criminal proceedings involving officials and other civil servants, the permission of the administrative authority must be obtained. This Provisional Law currently in force was a model for the new article. But now, the new draft law allows the administrative authority to decide on whether or not to try an official or a civil servant within the framework of the same article and within a specified time frame, for example within thirty or at most forty-five days. If this draft law comes into force in the near future it will, in a sense, be revolutionary.

Thus, these two laws will complement each other, one punishing torture and degrading treatment more heavily and the other making the trial procedures for officials and other civil servants far easier.

Again another important investigation conducted by the Human Rights High Co-ordinating Committee is extremely important with respect to certain provisions in the Turkish criminal procedure law, which were taken directly from the German criminal procedure law. At present, in Turkish law, there is only one provision concerning physical examination and this appears in the last paragraph of Article 66 of the Criminal Procedure Law. It is a provision consisting of one sentence: the physical examination of the suspect, accused, victim or other persons related to an offence may sometimes be necessary. This point should be redrafted with a contemporary understanding.

This subject has been redrafted in detail in the draft law prepared by the HRHCC under the co-ordination of the Ministries of Justice and Health and the participation of experts, taking into account the provisions subsequently added to the German criminal procedure law.

Various matters related to the physical examination and photographing of the accused, the physical examination of other persons, the physical examination of women and molecular genetic analyses (which has gained great importance today) are presented in detail within this framework. The new provisions are added to the Criminal Procedure Law as Articles 78/a-78/g.

The most important issue is finding evidence and witnesses to solve crimes. The new arrangements I have mentioned relate to finding evidence, in this case, those arrangements related to physical examinations and molecular genetic analyses, which will render an important service. Similarly, in order to prevent witnesses avoiding giving evidence for various reasons, be it insufficiency of time or fear, so as to reassure them, we are adding two articles to the Criminal Procedure Law—one new and the other amended. The Council of Ministers has submitted to the TGNA the draft law, which gathers new details for the two aforementioned issues together in a single text under the title Draft Law on the Amendment of Some Articles of the Criminal Procedure Law.

Moreover, draft amendments to various laws, such as the Law on the Organisation and Duties of the General Command of Gendarmerie and the Law for Identity Declaration, have been prepared or submitted to TGNA.

All these will be discussed in the TGNA within a specific time frame. Unfortunately, the fact that the fifty-fifth Government is a minority government means that it does not always have the opportunity to pass the laws from the Assembly as rapidly as it would like. We believe that our work on these issues and on others to which, in the interest of brevity, I have not referred to today, will continue into the 21st Legislative Period.

Another subject that is expected to be taken into consideration is the ombudsman project. As some historians have stated, the ombudsman institution was actually inspired by the Turkish institution of *kazasker*. During the period he was in Turkey, the Swedish King Charles XII appointed officials trusted to maintain justice and administration in his country. ‘Ombudsman’ was the name given to these officials. At present it can be seen that the institution of ombudsman is being applied under different names and in different forms as a safeguard to human rights in the democratic systems of almost 100 countries. Turkey intends to establish such a system, inspired directly by its own culture. We are making preparations for this institution, under the name of ‘public supervisor’, in the seventh five-year development plan. In this respect we have brought in the ombudsman laws of some countries. We have invited ombudsmen from some countries and also experts from the OSCE. For example, among those invited was the Chief Parliamentary Ombudsman of Sweden, the High Administrative Supervisor of the TRNC and also ombudsmen from Ireland and Finland. The invited ombudsmen and experts have participated in conferences in Turkey and we have held meetings with them, thus benefiting from their views. I was in Austria yesterday where I had the opportunity to meet with the ‘advocates of the public’. The ‘advocates of the public’ in Austria carry out the duty of ombudsmen. By availing ourselves of knowledge from other legal systems, we aim to establish such an institution in Turkey.

In this way, with judicial and non-judicial supervision, injustice may be avoided and the administration would thus be free to deal with more appropriate pressing activities. The committee of experts that we have established for this purpose is co-ordinated by the Ministry of Justice. The first draft drawn up by the committee of experts was discussed by the HRHCC, and was redrafted in the light of the views of various ministry representatives. I hope that these laws will be passed in the 21st Legislative Period, at the latest.

You are familiar with the difficulties encountered when passing legal bills through the TGNA. However, these are issues that can only be achieved through administrative routes, directives and instructions. One of these is the Regulation on Apprehension, Detention and Investigation, recently issued by the Ministry of Justice. This is an extremely important regulation. It is a detailed

arrangement that pays great attention to the amendments of the Law on Penal Proceedings Procedure, which assures the safety of those under detention and determines the required procedures for detention and release. It makes allowances for the training of officials, entails the training and granting of certification to the officials who conduct interrogations and makes it necessary for them to have a certificate to this end. Thus, the Directorate General of Security, namely the Police, and the General Command of the Gendarmerie, which until this point used two separate sets of instructions, have been integrated under this one new regulation.

On the other hand, the previously mentioned National Committee for the Decade of Human Rights Education was established by a regulation. By the way of another regulation, courses on human rights were made mandatory in the training of nominated officials before taking office. In an amendment to the State Officials Registry Statutes, 'respect for human rights' has been included among the matters to be considered in the assessment of officials. Thus, officials will be assessed by their superiors not only upon their successes, initiative or relations with private employers but also on their respect for human rights.

As can be seen, we are totally involved in the question of human rights.

The Ministry of Health has also passed the Regulation on Patients' Rights in this manner. From the very beginning the HRHCC supported such a regulation.

As a result of co-operation with NGOs, the HRHCC is to issue a report on women's problems and their recommended remedies. Three commissions established with the participation of women's associations prepared this report.

The report, entitled Right of Environment as A Human Right and its Application, which was prepared by a commission established by the HRHCC with the participation of environmental organisations, will be discussed in the next meeting of the HRHCC.

Furthermore, a working group has been established to study the condition of children in terms of human rights and the preventative measures that need to be taken. This work will be carried out by the Social Services and Children's Protection Fund under the supervision of the State Ministry and is to be completed in December 1998.

The issue of human rights is one in which we wholeheartedly believe. Therefore, we would like human rights to be respected in our country and in every part of the world.

However, we see that some countries are using the concept of human rights as an instrument of foreign policy. The world has become smaller as a result of globalisation. We all see and watch what goes on in each other's houses. Therefore, we consider the reaction of international society against human rights violations in any part of our country to be natural. We must do the same for human rights violations in other countries. But, our primary task is to raise human rights in our country to its highest level. However, human rights should never be used to cause unrest or destabilise other countries. Countries should not be singled out for excessive criticism while slack human rights observance in other countries is tolerated for reasons such as commercial benefit or economic relations. Constructive criticism is needed in the field of human rights. We believe that with its international participation, this symposium will do a great service to the development of human rights.

We know that we still have deficiencies in the area of human rights. All our activities are aimed at eliminating these deficiencies. Those who are evaluating Turkey should avoid double standards.

We are confronted with such double standards in various forms. Sometimes, similar events are evaluated differently according to the country in which they occur. For instance, European Union member states evaluate terrorism within the Union differently from terrorism in other countries. This is a double standard that cannot be accepted. Terror is terror everywhere. There is nothing that can legitimise terrorism.

We sometimes observe the same double standard in the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights. There are double standards in both the reality and in their applications. This should be avoided. The European Court of Human Rights is an international supreme court whose authority we accept as binding. This Court is obliged to adhere to the same criteria in all its decisions. The Court should reach similar results in similar cases using the same procedures and rules. The use of different criteria raises the question of double standards. This is something we can never accept.

We are sometimes confronted with this double standard on human rights in the stance of non-governmental organisations. In this meeting, priority has been given to the important issue of human rights defenders. We invite them to react against human rights violations wherever they happen, wherever they arise from and wherever they may take place. Human rights violations should be opposed every time and everywhere they occur. If the violations are by public officials or the security forces, then we must consider criticisms made in this regard as a warning. However, today, we are troubled by human rights violations in the form of terrorism, wiping out all human rights values, indeed destroying the one element that is the basis of all these rights, the right to life. If you only criticise human rights violations by public officials or the security forces and remain silent about terrorism, you steadily lose your legitimacy. In this event, human rights defenders will have to explain just whose rights they are defending. This would undoubtedly have a negative effect upon the development of human rights values and the hope of it ever encompassing the whole of humanity.

Therefore, we should react against any kind of human rights violations, no matter whether they are committed by official or non-official organisations, and no matter where these rights were violated. Whenever we do this without discrimination or ulterior motive, we will be successful.

I would like to make one further point: we have to make human rights a reality for each and every individual. We want human rights not only for some people but also for people of every ethnicity and every religion; for all humanity. The slogan of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is 'All human rights for all'. No person should be discriminated against due to his or her ethnic origin or religious belief. And no person should assume a position of superiority because he or she is of a particular ethnic origin or has a particular religious belief. Equality is a basic concept uniting each and every individual. Human rights should not be turned into an ethnic problem.

We believe that the values of human rights must be extended to all in Turkey for it is a part of our Constitution, the international documents we align ourselves with, and our duty to our people. Furthermore, we would like to contribute to the protection and development of human rights in the world as an honourable member of the international community. Therefore, we oppose in the same

manner human rights violations in any part of the world.

Within this framework, let us unite in our efforts to end human rights violations, not only in Turkey but also throughout the world, and establish a social order in which all individuals are given equal rights, living a life of dignity and freedom. I would like to extend my best regards to each and every one of you, in the belief that this symposium will enable important contributions to be made in this direction.

*Speech by Prof. Dr. Hikmet Sami Türk, at a symposium "Human Rights in Turkey: A Way Forward", organised by the Istanbul Bar Association and Amnesty International, 20-22 November 1998.