

Israeli guards kill three Kurds in Berlin

International repression follows Ocalan's capture

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Wednesday's indiscriminate shooting by Israeli security guards of Kurds protesting the seizure of Abdullah Ocalan, leader of the Workers Party of Kurdistan (PKK), claimed three lives and wounded sixteen others, including an 11-year-old boy.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu immediately claimed self defence, yet in none of the many other protests and occupations of Greek, Israeli and United Nations facilities has anyone been hurt or injured. The occupation of the Greek embassy in London ended peacefully on Thursday afternoon.

According to Miriam Shomrat, Israel's consul general in Berlin, no Israeli was injured in Wednesday's events. At about 2 p.m. approximately 200 Kurds marched toward the consulate in the Berlin suburb of Wilmersdorf. Some two dozen burst through a security cordon set up by German police and entered the building through windows on the first and second floors. A few were armed with sticks.

It is claimed that one protester tried to wrestle a pistol away from an Israeli guard and was shot and killed. An Israeli staff member was briefly detained by the protesters, but was quickly released. Despite this, Israeli security guards continued to fire for about 10 minutes.

Netanyahu justified this by declaring, "Our people have standing orders to prevent the taking of hostages and defend themselves, with force if necessary--including by opening fire."

The London-based Kurdish Television has publicly accused Israeli intelligence, along with the CIA, of working with Turkey to arrest Ocalan. A spokesperson commented, "The incident in Berlin today is an example and result of this alliance founded on this dirty

war."

The Social Democratic/Green Party coalition government in Germany immediately announced a crackdown against the country's 500,000-strong Kurdish population. Chancellor Gerhard Schröder told a Social Democratic Party (SPD) rally in Bavaria, "Anyone who breaks the law is not our friend.... We will tell them politely, but clearly, to leave."

Interior Minister Otto Schily, the former Green who defected to the SPD, said on Wednesday that the government was also considering tightening laws to allow the deportation back to Turkey of Kurds convicted of violence.

About 15 Kurds broke into the offices of Germany's governing Social Democratic Party in Hamburg to protest the government's role, taking a staff member hostage.

The threat to the democratic rights of the Kurdish people in the wake of Ocalan's arrest is growing throughout Europe and internationally. In Turkey itself, the government of Bulent Ecevit has carried out widespread repression of its Kurdish population at home and invaded Kurdish areas in Iraq. Police have detained a large number of protesters. Some 350 to 700 Kurdish activists--mostly members of the pro-Kurdish People's Democracy Party--have been rounded up in Istanbul and in several southeastern cities.

Reports of the armed incursion into northern Iraq cite the use of 4,000 troops with armoured vehicles, aided by a 1,000-strong pro-Turkey Kurdish militia. US-made Cobra helicopters have fired rockets at Kurdish rebel targets in the Metina mountains in a 15-kilometre push into Iraq.

Turkish security officials said, "The operation will

continue until its aims have been met," describing the victims of the assault as "terrorists". The US government, which has been carrying out air strikes against Iraqi installations in this region on the pretext of providing the Kurds with a "safe enclave" against Saddam Hussein, have not even made a verbal protest against the Turkish incursion.

In Spain, Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar pledged to try to block a meeting of the Kurdish parliament-in-exile, scheduled to take place in July. The Kurdish politicians have been invited to Spain by the Basque Nationalist Party. Aznar called the Kurdish parliament "a propaganda instrument of the PKK", which he denounced as a "terrorist organisation". He said his government would seek legal avenues to stop the meeting.

In Greece, the repression of Kurds continues. The government has threatened to deal with any protests "mercilessly". Immediately following Ocalan's arrest, 350 Kurds were placed in "preventative detention" in a disused army camp in Athens. Three ministers have resigned over the government's role in the Ocalan affair: Foreign Minister Theodoros Pangalos, Public Order Minister Philipos Petsalnikos and Interior Minister Alekos Papadopoulos.

Ocalan's own democratic rights continue to be flouted by the Turkish government. On the day he arrived back in Turkey, officials barred his legal team from entering the country. On entering Istanbul airport the three lawyers were taken off their plane by Turkish security officials and had their passports and tickets confiscated on the order of the Turkish Interior Ministry. The lead attorney, Britta Boehler, is a German who is based in the Netherlands. The Turkish authorities refused to allow the Dutch Consul to see the lawyers.

Ankara says it will not allow foreign observers at Ocalan's trial, which will be held at the island prison where he is currently detained.

Commenting on his refusal to allow Boehler to see her client, Ecevit said, "They want, more or less, to inspect the Turkish justice system. But they have no rights to have any doubts about it. Also the Turkish justice system has certain rules about who can defend."

Ecevit went on to assure one and all that Ocalan's trial would be fair, and in the next breath indicated precisely how "just" the proceedings will be, saying, "It need not last too long because all the illegal actions, the crimes

of the PKK's leadership, are well known."

In a statement to the press, Boehler said four of Ocalan's associates who were with him in Kenya were also to be handed over to Turkey. She said that the CIA was involved in his capture.

The European Court of Human Rights announced that Ocalan has complained of Turkey's violating his right to liberty and security and his right to a fair trial.



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