Turks mount protests in London

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Demonstrators protesting the brutal killing of dozens of political prisoners by Turkey's security forces earlier this week occupied the London Eye—the English capital's big wheel attraction—on Wednesday afternoon.

The 45 demonstrators, part of the Solidarity Committee with Political Prisoners in Turkey (Detudak), had occupied two pods on the 450-ft Ferris wheel. They were supported by a further 100 demonstrators who gathered beneath the wheel to chant slogans condemning the Turkish security forces' actions. The protestors gave themselves up to riot police, after a six-hour operation involving more than 200 police, fire and ambulance crews. Earlier, some 600 sightseers were evacuated from the London Eye after it was rumoured that the protestors had threatened to set light to themselves.

Speaking on a mobile phone during the protest, Sinan Unal, one the of London Eye occupiers, said: "This is a protest against the Turkish government which has allowed the military to enter more than 20 prisons across Turkey armed with smoke and fire bombs." Sinan Unal said that between 30 and 40 political prisoners have been killed or have gone missing.

Official reports claim that 17 prisoners and two security officers had been killed in Turkish jails after police mounted dawn raids at 20 of the country's jails on Tuesday. Human rights organisations put the death toll far higher, with hundreds having been injured.

The raids are aimed at crushing a 60-day hunger strike by 1,139 inmates, protesting government plans to move them to new, so-called "F-Type", prisons. The hunger strikers are prisoners convicted or on trial for membership of organisations deemed illegal under Turkey's draconian anti-terrorism laws. This includes many members of the banned nationalist Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), whose leader Abdullah Ocalan was sentenced to death last year by a Turkish court.

They argue that the move to new "F-type" prisons, which comprise small one or three-person cells, rather than the current dormitory style, will leave them isolated and vulnerable to abuse by the prison authorities. According to the New York based Human Rights Watch, 28 prisoners had been killed in Turkish jails by prison staff and security forces in the five years prior to Tuesday's raids.

Some of the inmates in Buca, Umraniye, Diyar Bakar and Ulucalmar prisons were on "death fasts", consuming only sugar dissolved in water for more than 60 days, and were already critically ill prior to the raids.

By Thursday, the Turkish authorities claimed to have reestablished control over 18 of the jails and had deployed police helicopters over Istanbul's Umraniye prison and Canakkale prison in western Turkey, where inmates were still holding out. Television footage at Canakkale prison where inmates surrendered mid-day Thursday, showed gaping holes in prison walls and heavily armed security forces positioned in ditches around the jail. Security forces also used smoke, gas or percussion grenades and firearms to enter the prisons.

Have regained control of the jails, Turkeys Justice Ministry immediately began moving inmates into the F-type prisons.

The London Eye protest was part of a series of actions in Britain to highlight the fate of Turkey's political prisoners. Also on Wednesday, demonstrators had occupied the London offices of the European Commission. Turkey is seeking membership of the European Union.

In a phone call to Reuter's news agency, those occupying the Commission said that they were the "families and friends of political prisoners in Turkey". Later 12 men and women were arrested and charged with trespassing on diplomatic premises. Earlier in the day, a man and woman chanting "Stop the massacres in Turkish prisons" from the public gallery in the House of Commons disrupted Prime Minister's Question

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Time. The pair were dragged from the gallery before they could unfold a banner they had been carrying. On Friday December 15, demonstrators also believed to be protesting in support of the hunger strikers, had occupied the premises of the Cyprus-Turkish Association in Soho, Central London

It is reported that demonstrators in Switzerland had taken control of a room in the country's parliament to protest the jail raids.

On Thursday morning, the 50 London Eye protestors appeared before Horseferry Road Magistrates Court in Central London and were charged with a series of public order offences.

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