

Free Mehmet Tarhan!

Gay conscientious objector jailed in Turkey

9 December 2005: International Day of Action



Mehmet Tarhan is a gay anarchist “total” conscientious objector – against all wars and any alternative to military service. He was sentenced to four years by a military court for “refusing orders”.

Turkey does not recognise conscientious objection and provides no alternative to military service.

For the Turkish military, homosexuality is an “illness”. Men applying for exemption on grounds of homosexuality must submit to an anal examination and often provide a video of sexual intercourse.

This is the equivalent of the notorious “virginity test” which the Turkish police and army have used for decades to judicially rape and sexually assault women, in particular Kurdish women.

Mehmet has refused to be classified as “ill” because he is gay and has demanded his right to be a conscientious objector. The Military Court of Appeal quashed the previous sentence, threatened judicial rape and ordered a re-trial on 15 December.



The Initiative for Solidarity with Mehmet Tarhan demonstrates in Turkey,



12 July, Wages Due Lesbians and Payday picket the Turkish embassy in England...



... and in the US...

INTERNATIONAL PROTESTS: Wages Due Lesbians and Payday will picket Turkish Airlines in **London, UK**, and have speak-out in **Philadelphia** – Other groups will protest in **Turkey** (Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Sivas) – **Finland** (Helsinki) – **France** (Paris) - **Germany** (Frankfurt, Berlin, Mainz, Münster) – **Holland** (The Hague) - **Italy** (Venice) – **Poland** (Warsaw) - **Scotland** (Glasgow) – **Serbia** (Belgrade) - **US** (New York)

LET US KNOW WHAT YOU CAN DO IN YOUR PART OF THE WORLD

See Payday's website www.refusingtokill.net



Jailed since April, Mehmet Tarhan has been attacked and tortured by prisoners and guards. He has been in solitary confinement for refusing the prison's military discipline. He has been on hunger strike twice (28 and 34 days) demanding that his attackers be punished. You can write to him at:

5. Piyade Egitim Tugayi, Askeri Cezaevi, Temeltepe – Sivas, Turkey.

We demand:

- ▶ An end to the mental and physical torture of Mehmet Tarhan, his immediate release from prison and discharge from the army;
- ▶ Recognition by Turkey of conscientious objectors' rights;
- ▶ Abolition of Turkish military's definition of homosexuality as an illness, requiring anal examination and visual “evidence” .

Email & Fax Blitz

Wherever you are on 9 December, let the Turkish authorities know that Mehmet is not alone.

Email or fax these demands to:

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan

fax: +90 312 417 0476 rte@akparti.org.tr

and to your *Turkish embassy*:

see: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/MFA/Ministry/TurkishRepresentations/searchRepresentatives.htm>

and cc: payday@paydaynet.org

Demanding the right to conscientious objection, not the right to kill

Mehmet's case is a signal for the international movement against war and for the right to conscientious objection.

Like many grassroots people, he wants no part of the "equality" advocated by some in the lesbian and gay movement: the right to be in the military, that is, the right to kill and to make war..

"If they grant gays the 'right' to do military service, I won't be going around saying 'hey let gay people go do their military service.' They shouldn't go. Heterosexuals shouldn't go either". **Mehmet Tahran**

My brother Mehmet



by Emine Tarhan

Since the day he was first taken into custody, our life became a true nightmare and it continues to be.

My other brother is doing compulsory service in the same military that imprisoned and tortured Mehmet, and he doesn't know what to do.

My mother suffers from heart trouble, diabetes, high cholesterol and high blood pressure. We hid Mehmet's imprisonment from her until the first hearing. The first time she saw him was two months later during the second trial. Mehmet could barely stand up because of the torture and couldn't move his neck. She was not allowed to visit him or hug him. My mother cannot travel because of her health problems and therefore cannot go see him.

As long as he is not in solitary confinement and there is no ban on visiting, I go to Sivas every week. I leave Istanbul on Tuesday and the trip takes 14 hours. The next day I meet with him for seven hours behind the wire fence, then I leave Sivas in the evening.

My mother, Mehmet and I, used to live in Istanbul. I had a business. Mehmet was working too. But increasingly I have been unable to give myself to work. Also I hadn't been able to leave Sivas for the first three months because of all that was going on there. His life threatened by other inmates and detainees in the prison, the physical and psychological repression of the prison administration, and the hunger strike he began as a response to all these, changed the course of our lives. I had to close down my business because I could not attend to it anymore, my mother and I were evicted from our house and had to move back to Iskenderun. Every time I meet him I am upset, saddened and angered because he is still there

What conscription is for Turkish army opens fire - 5 civilians killed 28 injured

A press release from the mayor of Yuksekova dated 18 November reveals that the Turkish army opened fire on demonstrators in this Kurdish town, killing Islam Bartin, Sefer Bor, Giyasettin Avcı, Ersin Menges, Abdulhaluk Geylani and wounding 28 other people. About 30,000 people had gathered to protest "government terrorism", in particular the bombing of a bookshop in the town of Semdinli on 9 November by undercover military.



"Mehmet Tarhan will not be a soldier"
(photo: Initiative for Solidarity with Mehmet Tarhan)

In Turkey, the army is everywhere: in the towns, on the countryside, at innumerable roadblocks. But there are 350,000-500,000 men who are refusing conscription. No one knows how many are Kurds who refuse to serve in a military that attacks their own people, torturing, raping and killing women, children & men, threatening and evicting villagers to make way for profitable dam projects. This is what Mehmet Tarhan is refusing to do.



DEFENDING OUR RIGHTS

European governments want to use Turkey's entry into the European Union to further undermine all our human rights, in Europe and globally

Turkey has been the most faithful US stooge since the cold war; the US provided the majority of the armaments Turkey used in its genocidal campaign against the Kurds in the 1990s. We will not allow Turkey to be added to Bush's allies in Europe.

Along with Mehmet, his family and supporters, we are demanding and defending our human rights to conscientious objection, to refuse to kill, to sexual choice, to live in a world free of war and dictatorship. Free Mehmet Tarhan, and all conscientious objectors!

INVEST IN CARING, NOT KILLING!

DONATION desperately needed for the campaign in Turkey. Please send cheque to
Payday PO BOX 287 London NW6 5QU – we will ensure that money gets to his family and supporters.

Wages Due Lesbians

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Payday a network of men working with the Global Women's Strike

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