



3.18.2011

TURKEY Twenty more arrests in Malatya murders following raids

Twenty people have been detained in Turkey in connection with the 2007 murders of three men at a Christian publishing house in Malatya. The arrests follow simultaneous raids on March 17 that occurred in nine Turkish provinces, including Malatya, Siirt, Mugla, Mersin and Izmir.

On April 18, 2007, Turkish citizen Necati Aydin and German citizen Tilman Geske were found tied to chairs by their hands and legs with their throats cut in Zirve Publishing Company, where they worked. A second Turkish citizen, Ugur Yuksel, died later in hospital from multiple stab wounds. All three were members of the Malatya Kurtulus Church. Those detained during the latest raids are alleged to have masterminded and incited these murders, and include a university theology lecturer, a non-commissioned officer from the Siirt Provincial Gendarmerie Command, and the retired colonel who commanded Malatya's Provincial Gendarmerie Brigade at the time of the murders.

Thursday's raids and arrests were part of investigations into Ergenekon, an alleged high-level, clandestine conspiracy to destabilize the Turkish government. The murders were reportedly formulated under Ergenekon's "Cage Action Plan", a scheme allegedly devised by military officers seeking to undermine the government through acts of terror, including assassinations of members of Turkey's minority communities, in order to facilitate a military take-over. Other murders linked to the Cage Action Plan are said to include those of Armenian-Turkish journalist Hrant Dink in 2007 and of Catholic Priest Father Andrea Santoro in 2006.

According to the Turkish Newspaper *Today's Zaman*, the on-going trial of five other suspects in the Malatya murders is now expected to be merged with the Ergenekon case.

Mervyn Thomas, Chief Executive Officer of Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), said: "CSW has continually requested a more in-depth investigation into the Malatya murders and the possibility of links to other attacks on non-Muslims in Turkey. We therefore welcome the recent arrests, and once again urge the Turkish authorities to ensure that the case continues to proceed without prejudice until justice is done."