



3.8.14

TURKEY | Malatya Case Suspects Released Under New Law

Five suspects on trial for torturing and killing three Christians in Malatya, Turkey in April 2007, were released on bail March 7, according to local news reports.

Under a package of judicial amendments to anti-terrorism laws, which was passed by the Turkish Parliament last month and signed into law by the president on the evening of March 6, the detention limit for suspects who are yet to be convicted was reduced from 10 years to five years, resulting in the immediate release on bail of the five main suspects in the Malatya case, whose court case has lasted for six years.

Concerns the suspects, who are facing possible life sentences, might attempt to leave the country once bailed have prompted lawyers for the victims to request they are fitted with electronic tagging devices upon their release.

On April 18, 2007, Turkish citizens Necati Aydin and Ugur Yuksel and Tillman Geske, a German citizen, were tortured and killed at the offices of Zirve Publishing House, a Christian publishing house in Malatya, by five young Muslims. Two of the suspects, currently out on bail, were arrested at the scene of the crime, while another jumped from a third-floor window in an attempt to escape and was arrested after receiving treatment for injuries.

A man accused of instigating the murder of prominent Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, who was shot dead outside the offices of his newspaper in Istanbul in January 2007, has also been released under the new laws.

Commenting on the new laws and the prospect of coming face-to face with any of the accused men, Susanne Geske, widow of Tillman Geske, said, "Please pray that [God] gives us wisdom how to react in such a case".

Mervyn Thomas, Chief Executive of Christian Solidarity Worldwide, said, "It is deeply disturbing to hear that the five men responsible for these brutal murders have been freed on bail, including three who were arrested at the crime scene. We urge the Turkish authorities to take every necessary measure to ensure they remain in the country to face justice, which has been exceedingly long in coming. This trial has been ongoing for six years with no indication of a conclusion in the near future. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families and friends of the victims, to whom the release of these men has dealt yet another blow, no doubt leaving them with a deepening sense of uncertainty as to whether they will ever see justice for their loved ones. For their sakes, the Turkish authorities must ensure that justice is served as a matter of urgency."