

mostly belonging to the DEP, were arrested in March 1994 for spreading separatist propaganda; they were convicted in December 1994, and sentenced to up to fifteen years, imprisonment. The mainstream Turkish press has been sharply critical of their convictions. In some cases, government opponents have been murdered under unexplained circumstances. The United Nations Committee against Torture report of November 1993 found evidence of the systematic torture of people in custody, bearing out allegations made by human rights advocates; there is no indication that the situation has improved since that time.

The insurgency in southeastern Anatolia by the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which began in 1984, provides the context for the most serious human rights concerns in Turkey. The PKK has itself committed documented atrocities against civilians, but in their efforts to suppress terrorism, Turkish security forces have also been guilty of grave human rights abuses. Fighting has escalated since July 1993 in the ten provinces of southeastern Turkey under emergency rule, and the Turkish government has declared the military defeat of the PKK to be its immediate goal. In pursuit of that goal, it has attacked, razed, and forcibly evacuated large numbers of Kurdish villages, while there are plausible but unconfirmed reports that Kurdish civilians have been forced into internment camps. Some Kurdish civilians have fled across the border into northern Iraq.

Turkey is ethnically heterogeneous, and Kurds who embrace the Turkish cultural identity are accepted easily into mainstream Turkish life; many members of parliament and several cabinet ministers, for example, are ethnic Kurds. There is a growing risk, however, that the PKK insurgency, and terrorist attacks it is undertaking outside the southeast, could polarize the Turkish population, and provoke an anti-Kurdish backlash. (Most Kurds live outside traditional Kurdish areas). Already, public support for human rights reforms has weakened due to the perception that terrorists would be the beneficiaries, and proposed reforms have become a subject of dispute within the governing coalition. The government lifted the interdiction against the private or cultural use of the Kurdish language in 1991, but its use in education, broadcasting and politics remains forbidden. Other minorities such as the Greeks, Armenians and Jews are officially protected but nonetheless experience some discrimination; their numbers are dwindling as a result of emigration.

CANADIAN POSITION

Canada condemns both terrorism and human rights abuses. Canadian representatives, up to and including the ministerial level, have consistently raised Canada's concerns over the human rights situation in Turkey during discussions with their Turkish counterparts on every appropriate occasion. The Minister of Foreign Affairs expressed Canadian concern when he met his Turkish counterpart at the NATO ministerial in Istanbul in June 1994. The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade called in the Turkish Ambassador in Ottawa in March 1994 when the DEP deputies were arrested and again in December 1994, when they were convicted; a representative of the Canadian Embassy in Ankara attended the opening of their trial in August 1994.