

0001 hrs gmt Wednesday 24 June 1992

£GREECE:

@TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT PATTERN

CONTINUES IN PRISONS. POLICE STATIONS

Scores of people were tortured or ill-treated at the hands of the Greek police or prison guards last year to intimidate them or force them to confess - and the pattern of ill-treatment is still continuing, Amnesty International said today.

In releasing its latest report, the human rights organization called on the government to establish a public commission of inquiry into the continuing torture and ill-treatment and to set up an independent ombudsman's office to oversee investigations of all complaints of this abuse.

"Victims are often afraid to complain about being tortured because they fear the police will get back at them or think the torturers won't be brought to justice anyway," Amnesty International said. "It's time for the government to make it clear that it won't stand for torture or ill-treatment in its police stations or prisons."

The organization said the police often don't let suspects see their lawyers until after they have confessed, which sets the scene for torture to take place. When victims have complained, some prosecutors and magistrates have refused to take up cases even when there were indications of torture. In prisons, inmates have sometimes been punished by being beaten by guards and put in cold, isolation cells with little or no food.

The 55-page report details some 35 cases of torture, where the victims have said they were punched, kicked and beaten with clubs or truncheons, or given electric shocks - and some have medical reports consistent with torture. One 26-year-old Turkish refugee died in hospital

after a savage beating by the anti-narcotics police in Athens; another person died in prison in disputed circumstances.

Foreigners who speak no Greek have been beaten into signing confessions they don't understand and in some cases juveniles were not allowed to contact their parents and were subsequently ill-treated and forced to sign confessions.

Women picked up by the police have also been sexually harassed in custody. In one case, a pregnant woman was ordered to strip naked in full view of passing policemen, taunted with obscene gestures, and beaten against the wall.

Amnesty International said it was concerned that basic safeguards to prevent prevent torture like giving detainees access to lawyers without delay haven't been put in place and that investigations into torture or ill-treatment allegations aren't always carried out. When formal complaints are lodged, the findings are only made public in the rare cases when the investigation results in a trial. Amnesty International knows of only two cases in the last two years in which law enforcement officials were convicted of exercising violence against detainees.

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