

### Introduction by the IRCT President, Dr Bhogendra Sharma

*It was with great sorrow that the IRCT earlier this month learnt that Vesselka Makarinova had died in a tragic car accident.*

*Mrs. Makarinova became interested in the international work against torture in the early 1990s when she was responsible for the Bulgarian section of Amnesty International. The vision of the movement against torture appealed to her personal and professional values, and inspired her to establish an organisation with the main goal of providing medical and psychological assistance to victims of torture. In this way, the Assistance Centre for Torture Survivors (ACET) was established in 1997. Vesselka Makarinova was the director and project manager of the centre till her death. She was fully committed to the cause of ACET and was instrumental in extending the services of ACET to include also Bulgarians who had been repressed by the communist regime.*

*Her pioneer work with police officers in the field of torture prevention helped increase the respect for human rights within the police force and influenced the way in which the police carry out their day-to-day work.*

*Vesselka Makarinova was a very open-minded, sensitive and understanding person. Her devotion and readiness to help others was unique and benefited many people, including the ACET staff and clients. The people who knew her will remember her with fondness and will appreciate the impact she had. Her personality, her ideas and all her achievements will continue to inspire the team at ACET, her colleagues in the BAN network, and all those in the global movement against torture.*

## Members of the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey sentenced to prison

On 13 February 2004, several members of the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (HRFT), Izmir, were sentenced to prison by the Aliaga first instance Penal Court.

The HRFT psychiatrist, Dr Alp Ayan, was sentenced to 18 months and one day in prison, and Mrs. Günseli Kaya, together with the other 28 defendants, to 18 months in prison. Another defendant, Mr Adnan Akin was sentenced to three years in prison. The rest of the defendants were acquitted. The defendants are planning to appeal the convictions.

The prosecutions are based on the defendants' participation in the funeral of Nevzat Ciftci that took place on 30 September 1999. Mr. Ciftci was killed during the military operation in Ankara Ulucanlar prison on 26 September 1999. The defen-

dants were charged with "resistance and opposing through violent means" when the police, according to testimonies, had set up barricades and violently attacked the group to prevent them from attending the funeral.

This spring, Dr Alp Ayan is appearing in court in three different cases against him, for example in a case where he is accused of "excessive criticism of State authorities". In addition to that, nine executive board members of the HRFT have been charged with "having collected contributions without obtaining permission" and "co-operating with international organisations without permission". The combined effect of these numerous charges is very serious for the continuation of the important work of the HRFT, which has a well-

established track record as defenders of human rights in Turkey.

When Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan came to power in 2001, he declared zero tolerance towards torture. However, not one single case has been filed against the perpetrators while Mr. Erdogan has been in office. In 2003, nearly 1,000 victims of torture received treatment at the HRFT, and the figure for 2002 was approximately the same. This indicates that the human rights situation in Turkey has not improved, and the prison sentences to Mrs Günseli Kaya, Mr Adnan Akin and Dr Alp Ayan are a clear signal from Turkey to the rest of the world that the human rights situation in Turkey has gone from bad to worse.

## IRCT mission to Sri Lanka

Since 2003, the IRCT has collaborated with the World Medical Association (WMA), the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (HRFT), and Physicians for Human Rights USA (PHR USA) on an ambitious project for the global implementation of the Istanbul Protocol, a project which is supported by the European Commission. The objective of the project is to address the identified needs for training of health and legal professionals. Local partners in the project will include rehabilitation centres, national medical associations, and legal organisations.

Sri Lanka is one of the five countries where training seminars on the implementation of the Istanbul Protocol will take place. In spite of its international standing among legal, health, and human rights experts, awareness is still relatively limited of the Istanbul Protocol: "Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other

Cruel and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment". In most cases, medical and legal university curricula do not provide instruction on the examination of torture victims, the treatment of torture victims, or the consequences of torture. As a result, many health and legal professionals have little or no training in the investigation and documentation of torture, which requires specific technical skills and knowledge about medical and legal procedures.

A team existing of Dr Blachar (WMA), Mrs Alice Verghese and Dr Margriet Blaauw (both IRCT) visited Sri Lanka in preparation of the upcoming seminar on the Istanbul Protocol Implementation Project (for further information about the project, please visit [www.irct.org/usr/irct/home.nsf/unid/JREW-5GHNP8](http://www.irct.org/usr/irct/home.nsf/unid/JREW-5GHNP8)).

The main objective of the mission was to identify local partners and to liaise with the Sri Lankan authorities and civil

society. During the many meetings, the team was assured by authorities and civil society that a project on the effective investigation and documentation of allegations of torture is a very relevant issue in Sri Lanka. Although there are several highly qualified people working in the field of investigation of torture, many areas of the country are still without this expertise. Local experts who are able and willing to contribute to the implementation of the Istanbul Protocol in Sri Lanka have now been identified, and it is expected that the actual seminar will take place in November 2004.

During the visit, the team met with Michael Anthony Emanuel Fernando (Tony Fernando). His case is being dealt with by the United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) and further information is available on [www.omct.org](http://www.omct.org).