

WRITTEN QUESTION P-2212/08
by Feleknas Uca (GUE/NGL)
to the Commission

Subject: Incidents during the 2008 celebrations of Newroz in south-east Turkey

Unfortunately, this year's Newroz festivities were again marked by altercations and police aggression. In every town in which Newroz was celebrated, arrests took place and injuries occurred. The celebrations in Siirt, Van and Yüksekova were particularly marred by violence. Three people overall died in police attacks. In Van, Zeki Erinç and Ramazan Dal were injured by police shots and taken to hospital, where they later died of their injuries. I have been told that the Governor of Van ordered the use of new weapons delivered the day before the Newroz festivities. These new weapons firing plastic bullets were then tested on the public the following day. Equally frightening and disturbing was the extreme severity of response and brutality of the Turkish security forces in Yüksekova. The Turkish police deployed special forces, robocops, firearms, tanks, gas bombs, water cannons, helicopters, fighter planes and batons. Twenty-year-old Yasar Ikbal was killed by shots fired by Turkish security forces. Selim Akbas, Raif Iren and Savas Babalitas were also seriously injured. At least 50 people were wounded by police shots. The overall number of injured ran into the hundreds. I was in the region myself from 18 to 22 March, in my capacity as MEP, for the Newroz celebrations and can confirm from my own observations the disproportionately brutal actions of the Turkish security forces.

1. Will the Commission call on the relevant Turkish authorities to investigate and explain these incidents, in particular the use of these new weapons?
2. Will the Commission send its own delegation to investigate the deaths and incidents that occurred in these places?
3. How does the Commission intend to urge Turkey, rather than just paying lip service, to observe human rights standards and not to leave those responsible unpunished?