

# Mumcu assassination destabilizes Turkey

by Joseph Brewda

The assassination of prominent Turkish investigative journalist Ugur Mumcu on Jan. 24 has had a major effect on the region. Not only has Turkey been internally destabilized, but Iran has also been blamed. Mumcu, who was considered one of the leading secular voices in the country, was killed instantly by a bomb placed in his car as he left his home in Ankara for his newspaper *Cumhuriyet*. Within hours, callers to the media, identifying themselves as representing two previously unknown Islamic organizations, claimed responsibility for the murder. Four days later, purported Islamic assailants also allegedly attempted to kill Jak Kamhi, the head of the Turkish branch of B'nai B'rith, the Jewish masonic organization. A similar bomb killed the Israeli embassy's security chief last March, also allegedly planted by an Islamic group.

Mumcu was well known throughout Turkey and Europe for his articles on the Kurdish separatist movement, the Iranian revolution, and the narcotics trade. A leading critic of Turkey's involvement in the 1991 war on Iraq, Mumcu was reportedly investigating the relationship between the Kurdish Workers Party terrorist organization (the PKK) and U.S. intelligence at the time of his death. In his last known interview, with the Italian magazine *Il Sabato* in December, Mumcu reiterated an assertion with which he had long been associated: that the 1981 attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II by the Turkish national, Mehmet Ali Agca, was jointly sponsored by the U.S. and Soviet secret services, and not, as many have it, merely by either one side or the other.

## Was Iran responsible . . .

Within two days of the killing, Turkish authorities detained at least 16 people said to be members of a Iranian-linked "Islamic movement" which they said was probably responsible for the killing. Partially as a result of such claims, Mumcu's funeral, attended by 500,000 people, became an anti-Iranian demonstration. "Down With Fascism," "Turkey Will Not Be Another Iran," and "Down With *Sharia*," were the slogans. Hundreds of thousands of people participated in similar demonstrations in several cities throughout the country.

Speaking at a news conference on Feb. 4, Turkish Interior Minister Ismet Sezgin asserted that his ministry's investiga-

tions had determined that the group which killed Mumcu had also killed other journalists and security officials over recent years. "The perpetrators of the murders," he asserted, "have connections with Iran." Although careful not to accuse the Iranian government directly of responsibility, he added that the group had received military and theoretical training at an installation near Teheran. This, he said, "is food for thought." On the same day, Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel's council of ministers met to review the findings. Demirel had earlier publicly cautioned against claims that Iran was responsible. "We realize that certain incidents might have been staged simply to hurt our relations," he said.

The Iranian government has protested Sezgin's statements as "political propaganda" and denied the accusations. Iranian officials, speaking confidentially, have added: "Mumcu was killed when our interior minister was in Ankara on a state visit, following months of deteriorating relations. What country would do this under these circumstances?"

## . . . or the United States?

According to well-placed Turkish officials, the assassins of Mumcu were trained in Iran, as has been claimed, but, these sources also emphasize, "the orders for the murder came from the United States." Reportedly, the murder was orchestrated out of a special operations section of U.S. intelligence based in Cairo, Egypt. The group employed in the murder was jointly controlled by U.S. and Iranian intelligence, it is said. Some Turkish sources have also reported that a special NATO intelligence unit based in "Poised Hammer" headquarters in Diyarbakir, the center of Turkey's Kurdish region, may have been involved. Poised Hammer is the Anglo-American-led force allegedly involved in protecting the Kurds of northern Iraq.

The murder, according to this analysis, had three main objectives. First, it was intended to destabilize Turkey and worsen Turkish relations with Iran, which it has accomplished. "It is no secret," one figure in the region reported, "that the U.S. would like to see a Turkish-Iranian war." Such a war would further the disintegration of the region, and help prepare a North-South, Christian-Muslim conflict—which has long been Anglo-American policy, and which will presumably remain U.S. policy despite the change in administration.

The second objective was simply to be a show of force, to display American (and British) capabilities within Turkey. "We can do anything we want to do, so you'd better comply with our demands," was the intended message.

And the third was to eliminate Mumcu, whose investigations, and role as a mouthpiece for a section of the Turkish elite, have hindered U.S. operations in the region. Mumcu's investigations into the origin of the Khomeini revolution, narcotics smuggling, and terrorism tended to show that such purported adversaries as the United States and Iran may have some strange alliances.