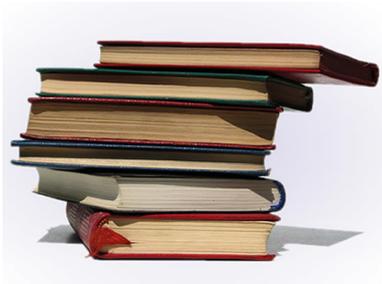


No justice five years after brutal murder of three Christians in Turkey

Country/Region: Turkey

As the fifth anniversary of the murders of three Christians at a publishing house in Turkey is marked this week, those responsible for their deaths are yet to be brought to justice.

Memorial services were held at the grave sites of Necati Aydin, Ugur Yuksel and German national Tilman Geske on Wednesday 18 April, five years to the day that they were brutally murdered at the Zirve Christian publishing house in Malatya, eastern Turkey.



The publishing house printed Bibles and other Christian literature

The three men were discovered bound to chairs by their hands and feet; each of them had been brutally stabbed and had their throats cut. Ugur was still alive when they were found but died later in hospital from his many wounds.

Five men, aged 19 and 20 at the time, were arrested at the scene and charged with murder. They each carried a note that read, "The five of us are brothers, we are going to death, we may not return. Give up any legitimate claim against us."

Their trial opened in November 2007, and there have been 38 hearings since then but no verdict in the case. It has been complicated by attempts to identify those who instigated the murders.

At a hearing in February, the judges announced that an indictment was being prepared against those suspected of masterminding the killings and would be ready for the next hearing, scheduled to begin on 9 April. But the indictment is not yet ready, so the case was postponed until 18 June. Former local military police commanders and other officials, who are already in

custody, are expected to be named.

There were concerns that the perpetrators could be released because, under Turkish law, accused parties who are not formally convicted and sentenced within five years are exonerated. But this law does not apply in terrorism cases, and the Malatya murders have been designated as such.

In its 2012 annual report, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) named Turkey as one of the world's worst violators of religious freedom. Among the concerns raised about the country were "the delay of trials through lengthy procedures and the lack of convictions on some high profile cases"; the Malatya case was named as one of them.

The shocking crime attracted high media coverage, and Tilman's widow, Suzanne Geske, was interviewed on Turkish television shortly afterwards, where she expressed her forgiveness of her husband's murderers. The couple had three children.

Necati was also married and had two children. Ugur was engaged; his fiancée has since married another Christian man.