



human rights *first*

THE NEW NAME OF

LAWYERS COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

April 26, 2004

Mr. Clark Kent Ervin
Department of Homeland Security
Office of the Inspector General
Washington DC 20528

Re: AVCI

Dear Mr. Ervin:

I write to ask that you investigate the claims of Mr. Ismail Hakki Avci, a former U.S. resident, who was detained in the post-September 11th immigration sweeps and deported to Turkey in April 2002. Mr. Avci, supported by the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, alleges that he was physically and psychologically abused by guards and government officials in the course of his "arrest" and while he was detained in Middlesex Adult Correctional Center in New Jersey from March 20, 2002 until he was deported on April 24, 2002. If true, these allegations raise serious concerns about the conduct of detention center officials, and require your office's prompt attention.

At the time of his deportation, Mr. Avci had lived in the United States for thirteen years. According to the account he has provided to Human Rights First¹, government officials arrested him at his house in Stream Valley, New York, in March 2002 at approximately 5:00 a.m., and transferred him to the Immigration District office located at 26 Federal Plaza in Manhattan. Mr. Avci alleges that he was there blindfolded, physically abused, and interrogated about his connection with Al-Qaeda and Hezbollah. He says he vehemently denied any knowledge of any of these organizations. After a day of interrogation, Mr. Avci was moved to Middlesex Adult Correction Center in New Jersey. He remained at the center until he was deported on April 24, 2002. Throughout this period, Mr. Avci claims that he was repeatedly physically abused and denied timely access to a lawyer, family or friends.

As you know, the Justice Department Office of the Inspector General issued a report on June 2, 2003 finding that the predominantly, Arab, Muslim, South Asian men detained following September 11, 2001, had been severely mistreated at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn, New York. Mr. Avci's allegations raise new concerns that incidents

¹ Human Rights First conducted a telephone interview with Mr. Avci as well as spoke with the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey regarding Mr. Avci's treatment.

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Washington D.C. Office

of abuse and mistreatment extended to other detention centers, including the one in which Mr. Avci was detained.

We have welcomed your engagement in these and other matters of concern to the human rights community, and I am confident I can continue to count on your attention to these issues. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Deborah Pearlstein