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September 29, 2005

Dear Friends,

I am writing to you from Istanbul, where we have recently released our report. The outpouring of support from our allies has been deeply moving. There has been tremendous interest in the story from the public. Today, the story was covered in five major papers and two major television stations in Turkey. The local coverage has been very powerful and very sympathetic.

I believe that the report has been so well received because it is the product of a genuine collaboration with Turkish activists. Abide Özkal, the mother of a woman with an intellectual disability, spoke at our press conference about her twenty year struggle against discrimination and stigma. "What we need is to accept people with disabilities into our society and we will all be the richer for it," she implored. We also heard from Mesut Demirdoğan, an ex-patient, who described his own frightening experience of being subjected to ECT. As Director of the *Friends of Schizophrenia Association of Istanbul*, he is a leader in the struggle for the rights of people with psychiatric disabilities in Turkey.

I encourage you to look at our report, examine the photographs of children and adults living in Turkish institutions, and read the accompanying press coverage. Now that the report is public, the hard work of bringing about change in Turkey is just beginning. I hope you will support our work.

Sincerely,



Eric Rosenthal
Executive Director