

# MENTAL DISABILITY RIGHTS INTERNATIONAL

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Contact:

Laurie Ahern 202.296.6573 (Washington, DC) [lahern@mdri.org](mailto:lahern@mdri.org)  
Sehnaz Layikel 90 532 650 8676 (Istanbul) [sehnazlayikel@gmail.com](mailto:sehnazlayikel@gmail.com)

## EUROPEAN UNION CALLS ON TURKEY TO IMPROVE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH MENTAL DISABILITIES

WASHINGTON, DC – NOVEMBER 9, 2005 – Following the September 28<sup>th</sup> report released by Mental Disability Rights International (MDRI), detailing the human rights abuses perpetrated against children and adults with mental disabilities in Turkey, the European Union (EU) today responded by voicing their concern in the annual Turkey accession 2005 progress report:

“Turkey has no mental health law and community care for the mentally disabled is scarce, with the result that individuals are often unnecessarily institutionalized. The use of electroconvulsive or “shock” therapy (ECT) without anesthesia has been reported. There are also reports of a lack of rehabilitation treatment, the unnecessary use of physical restraints and the inadequate feeding of persons in rehabilitation centers and orphanages.”

"It is extremely important that the EU has raised concerns about the human rights of people with disabilities in Turkey," said Eric Rosenthal, Executive Director of MDRI. "Abuses that take place behind the closed doors of institutions are all too often overlooked by the public and international oversight bodies. By raising these concerns, the EU report ensures that egregious abuses against children and adults with mental disabilities will be taken into account as Turkey applies for EU accession."

In its report, *Behind Closed Doors: Human Rights Abuses in the Psychiatric Facilities, Orphanages and Rehabilitation Centers of Turkey*, MDRI describes the widespread use of ECT treatment on psychiatric patients – including children – without the use of anesthesia. Investigators also found evidence of children dying from starvation, dehydration and lack of medical care in so-called rehabilitation centers.

In October, the country was again stunned when video aired on Turkish television depicting toddlers being beaten at a state-run orphanage in Malatya. Province.

MDRI is an international advocacy organization dedicated to the human rights and full participation in society of people with mental disabilities worldwide.

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For a copy of the report or to view video clips and photographs visit [www.mdri.org](http://www.mdri.org)