

# Update: Martyrs in Malatya, Turkey Remembered

One year ago, ITM covered in this space the terrible murder-martyrdom of three Christians, brutally killed at the publishing house where they served the Lord in a literature ministry to Muslims. This is an update on that tragedy compiled from several sources including WorldNetDaily.

There are five suspects on trial in Turkey for the murder on April 18, 2007 of **Necati Aydin** (35) Pastor of the local Protestant church in Malatya; **Ugur Yuksel** (32), an adult convert – single, but engaged to a Christian girl and **Tilmann Geske** (46), a German missionary serving Christ in Turkey with his family.

The accused are: Emre **Gunaydin**, the alleged ring-leader, Hamit **Ceker**, Cuma **Ozdemir**, Abuzer **Yildirim** and Salih **Gurler**. The latter four now finger Gunaydin as the master-mind who planned the attack and they just “went along unaware of his intentions of murder.” For his part, Gunaydin says, “I remember very clearly Salih slanting his knife, stabbing and twisting it into Ugur’s back.”

Gunaydin stated in a letter to the court, “Our purpose was just to gather information and give it to the press.” The knives they carried with them were “only to protect ourselves,” he said.

Compass Direct, which has been following and documenting the case, said court testimonies by the five suspects were completed this week [mid-May] during a sixth hearing before Malatya’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Criminal

Court. “All have insisted that they had not planned to murder anyone and that no individual or group instigated their raid on the Zirve Publishing Company on April 18, 2007,” the report said.

Gunaydin repeated previous explanations that the attack erupted when Necati “slandered” Islam by stating that Jesus is God. Later, in police custody, he stated that he planned to kill Aydin’s brother-in-law, also a Christian pastor. Remember Gunaydin was taken into custody after he fell from the third-floor balcony to the street in a failed endeavor to escape the scene of the massacre. Now he claims the trauma he suffered invalidated his previous statements.

Due to conflicting testimonies of the five suspects, Judge Eray Gurtekin has postponed cross-examination until a hearing later this month. Also to be considered is new evidence from a prison inmate who alleges that he was offered \$300,000 in 2005 to “kill anyone he found at the Zirve Publishing office in Malatya.” He wound up in prison for another murder and Gunaydin “was given this job.”

Christians make up less than 1% of the population in Turkey, yet they have been subjected to numerous

attacks in recent years. A Turkish teen shot to death a Roman Catholic priest as he prayed in his church in 2006. Two other priests were attacked the same year. Last year, Armenian Christian editor Hrant Dink was martyred.

Still remembered in Turkey are the words of Tilmann’s widow, **Susanne**, in a TV interview following the massacre last April she said, “O God, forgive them for they know not what they do.” Blood for blood revenge is the norm in Turkey, but her forgiving spirit has earned nationwide respect.

Voice of the Martyrs notes that 2,000 years earlier, Christians in this location [Smyrna] were addressed in Revelation 2:10 “*Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested...be faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life.*”

It’s been just over a year now since that fateful morning when three Christian missionaries wanted to share their faith with young Muslims who’d expressed an interest in

reading the Bible. Shortly after they opened the Word the long knives emerged and the blood began to flow.

This was not a sudden burst of passionate hatred, but rather a long-planned and well-organized assault. The ritualistic and torturous manner of the murder (particularly the slicing of fingers) is straight out of the Qur’an: Surah 8:12 under the *Spoils of War*, “I will strike terror into the hearts of Unbelievers. Flay their necks (with a sword) and strike every finger.” Later, an autopsy by Dr. Murat Ugras revealed that, “Their fingers were repeatedly sliced to the bone lengthwise.” The long, slow torture lasted over 3 hours until final relief came when their throats were slit from ear to ear.

With militant Islam posing a much greater threat than Communism ever did – not only to our freedoms, but to our very lives – I am convinced that we must understand what motivates the Jihadists and learn what the Qur’an tells them to do and why. We’ll focus on those questions in future issues.

Watch this space!

**Bill Bathman – Cape Town**

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