

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

## News Flash

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### **Jordan: Sentence against Toujan al-Faisal a blow to freedom of expression**

Amnesty International condemned the 18-months prison term imposed today on Toujan al-Faisal, former member of the Jordanian Parliament. "This is a sad day for freedom of expression in Jordan. Toujan al-Faisal has been imprisoned solely for exercising her fundamental right to express her opinion," the organization said.

Toujan al-Faisal was arrested in March following her public criticism of the Jordanian government. She was convicted by the State Security Court on charges of "tarnishing the Jordanian state", defamation of the judiciary, "uttering words" before another deemed to be "detrimental to his religious feeling", "publishing and broadcasting false information abroad which could be detrimental to the reputation of the state", and inciting "disturbances and killings." She has received the harshest sentence allowed on such charges.

Toujan al-Faisal was held in detention for some 11 days until being released on bail on 27 March and was re-arrested three days later and has remained in prison ever since. Currently she is in Jweidah Prison and will be moved to Swaqa Prison, in the desert, 80 kilometres from Amman. She has no right of appeal against the sentence.

"Sentencing Toujan al-Faisal has breached international human rights treaties which Jordan has ratified," said Amnesty International. "As we feared, the Jordanian courts are using new measures supposedly introduced to fight 'terrorism' to clamp down on the individual's exercise of the right to criticize government policy."

#### **Background**

Toujan al-Faisal was sentenced under a law promulgated through a provisional royal decree two weeks after the 11 September 2001 attacks. The law not only expanded the definition of "terrorism" but also further restricted freedom of expression in Jordan. Offences committed under the law were transferred to the State Security Courts, which almost invariably use military judges and do not provide the same guarantees of independence and impartiality provided by the ordinary courts. (See *Jordan: Security measures violate human rights*, February 2002, AI Index: MDE 16/001/2002)

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For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566  
Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>