

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 30/29/99

22 July 1999

Further information on EXTRA 60/98 (MDE 30/22/98, 25 August 1998) and follow-up (MDE 30/24/98, 8 September 1998, MDE 30/14/99, 20 May 1999 and MDE 30/17/99, 25 May 1999) - health concern/prisoners of conscience

TUNISIA Afef Ben Rouina  
Imen Derouiche  
Hinda Aaroui

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On 14 July, Afef Ben Rouina, Imen Derouiche and Hinda Aaroui were sentenced to between 15 and a half and 17 and a half months' imprisonment. They should be released within the next few weeks, as the length of their sentences nearly matches the time they have already spent in prison.

The three women were tried with 17 co-defendants, most of them students, in a case that involved alleged members of the unauthorized *Parti communiste des ouvriers tunisiens* (PCOT), Tunisian Workers' Communist Party. The marathon trial, which opened on 10 July and lasted for 20 hours, ending at 5am the next day, was characterized by disrespect for the rights of the defence. At one point all the defence lawyers walked out in protest at the judge's decision to prevent one of them from continuing his argument to the court.

**No further action is required from the network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.**