

URGENT ACTION

EX-PRISONERS DETAINED INCOMMUNICADO

Former prisoners Ayman Gharib and Anis el-Krifi were arrested early in the morning of 19 July, at their homes in the town of Menzel Bourguiba, in the north of Tunisia. Their families have not heard from them and do not know where they are or why they were arrested.

Their homes were among many that the security forces broke into in the early hours of 19 July. All testimonies collected by Amnesty international show a similar pattern. According to reports, large numbers of security officers with their faces covered stormed a number of houses. Witnesses told Amnesty International that they proceeded to beat the members of the family in the houses, in the dark and shooting in the air, before turning on the light and asking for the person they had come in search of and arresting him if he was there.

Several people were arrested during these raids and later released. However, Ayman Gharib and Anis el Krifi were among those not released. Ayman Gharib's mother said the security officers came in fully armed claiming they were searching for weapons. They did not find any but insisted on taking Ayman Gharib with them, and beat his mother on the arm when she tried to stop them.

Anis el-Krifi was arrested with three of his brothers, one of them aged only 12. The three brothers were later released. Anis el-Krifi's brother Walid el-Krifi, said security officers had continued to beat them and swear at them until they reached el-Gourjani police station. Both Ayman Gharib and Anis el-Krifi had spent several years in prison sentenced under the controversial 2003 anti-terrorism law,. Ayman Gharib had been released earlier this year while Anis was released in 2008. Neither man's family has heard from him since, and they have received no information when they have inquired with prison authorities.

Walid Boujbali and Haitham el-Mejri, two men who have not been in prison before, were arrested in a similar manner and have also not been released.

Please write immediately in Arabic, French, English or your own language:

- Urging the Tunisian authorities to disclose the whereabouts of Ayman Gharib, Anis el-Krifi, Walid Boujbali and Haitham el-Mejri immediately, allow them immediate access to their families, lawyers of their choice and any medical attention they may require, and ensure that they are protected from all forms of torture or other ill-treatment;
- Calling on them either to charge the four men with recognizably criminal offences, and try them in fair proceedings, or release them.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 24 AUGUST 2011 TO:

Minister of Justice and Human Rights

Lazhar Karoui Chebbi
Ministry of Justice and Human Rights
57 Bab B'net
1006 Tunis - La Kasbah
Tunisia
Fax: + 216 71 568 106
Email: mju@ministeres.tn
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Interior

Habib Essid
Ministry of Interior
Avenue Habib Bourguiba
1000 Tunis
Tunisia
Fax: +216 71 340 888
Email: mint@ministeres.tn
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Director General of Prisons and Re-education
Direction générale des prisons et de la rééducation
Rue 8003 – Appartement L
Espace de Tunis
Monplaisir, Tunis, Tunisia

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives of Tunisia accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Security officers also went to the homes of other former prisoners in Menzel Bourguiba who had been imprisoned under the controversial 2003 anti-terrorism law. They left when the men they were looking for were not at home, but only after beating other family members or ransacking the houses. Khaled el-Arfaoui's mother, Zainab Chebli, herself a human rights activist, told Amnesty International that the family had been in Tunis when security officers forced their way into their home. Neighbours told them that at least 50 security officers had entered with their faces covered. The neighbours also said that when they tried to intervene, the officers aimed their weapons at their faces and told them to be silent. Zeinab Chebli said that most of their furniture was destroyed. Her son Khaled el-Arfaoui had spent five years in prison on terrorism-related charges, and had been released in May 2010.

Likewise, Saber el-Najri was not at home when the security forces arrived. However, his father told Amnesty International that the officers broke down the door, came into the house and proceeded to beat him, his wife and his two daughters. He said the officers also fired at least 20 shots in the air. All this was in the dark before the officers finally turned on the light to ask for Saber el-Najri's whereabouts. They left when they did not find him. Saber el-Najri's father said he had many bruises as a result and his wife's right shoulder was dislocated.

The arrests come following increasing tension in several parts of the country. A demonstration in the Tunis district of al Kasbah on 15 July was forcibly dispersed by security officers. The Tunis incident sparked clashes between demonstrators and security officers in Menzel Bourguiba. A police station and police car were reportedly set on fire on Saturday 16 July. The following day, in Sidi Bouzid, a 13-year-old boy was shot dead when army officers used live ammunition to disperse a demonstration. A curfew has now been put in place in both Sidi Bouzid and Menzel Bourguiba

The Tunisian anti-terrorism law has been repeatedly criticized by UN human rights bodies and local and international human rights organizations as overly general and broad, and has been used as a repressive measure to curtail legitimate dissent. Similar concerns were reiterated by the UN Human Right Committee in March 2008 in its concluding observations regarding Tunisia and more recently by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism following his visit to Tunisia in May 2011. See also Amnesty International reports: Amnesty International, *Continuing Abuses in the Name of Security* (Index: MDE 30/010/2009) and Amnesty International, *In the Name of Security: Routine Abuses in Tunisia* (Index: MDE 30/007/2008)

Name: Ayman Gharib, Anis El-Krifi, Walid Boujbali and Haitham el-Mejri
Gender Male

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