

4 May 2000

Further information on UA 98/00 (MDE 30/07/00, 28 April 2000) - fear for safety and new concerns: prisoner of conscience/ health concern

TUNISIA Human rights defenders and their relatives

Jallal Zoughlami, brother of journalist Taoufik Ben Brik, was sentenced to three months' imprisonment by the Tribunal of First Instance on 3 May 2000. Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience and is calling for his immediate and unconditional release. He has been on hunger strike since 30 April.

Jallal Zoughlami was accused of violence against law-enforcement officers and inciting people to break the law. Amnesty International believes that Jallal Zoughlami has been victimized for trying to stop police from beating up and abducting 70-year-old Ali Ben Salem on 26 April. The police beat and arrested him, and he sustained several injuries, including one to his left eye.

Taoufik Ben Brik, who has been on hunger-strike since 3 April, was given a new passport on 1 May, which was one of his demands. Two days later the chair of investigating magistrates in Tunis closed all investigations against Taoufik Ben Brik, on the grounds of insufficient evidence, and lifted the travel ban imposed on him.

After his brother Jallal Zoughlami was sentenced, Taoufik Ben Brik announced that he would leave Tunisia and pursue his hunger-strike in France until his brother is released. He flew to France on the afternoon of 4 May, accompanied by a Moroccan doctor specializing in intensive care. At Tunis airport, the doctor was threatened by a man who reportedly said, "you are a traitor, I'll kill you". Lawyers who had come to say farewell to Ben Brik had to stop the man from assaulting the doctor.

Human rights defenders and relatives trying to visit Taoufik Ben Brik on 25 and 26 April were beaten, ill-treated and harassed by security forces. Jallal Zoughlami and others were arrested and beaten when they to visit him at home on 26 April. Among them was 70-year-old Ali Ben Salem, who sustained spinal injuries. He has since been able to leave hospital.

Fathi Chamkhi, Mohamed Chourabi and Iheb el Hani, arrested on 8 April on charges including disturbance of public order and defamation of the authorities, remain in detention.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in Arabic, French or your own language:

- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Jallal Zoughlami, who is imprisoned as a prisoner of conscience;
- seeking assurances that Jallal Zoughlami will be given all necessary medical care;
- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Fathi Chamkhi, Mohamed Chourabi and Iheb el Hani, who are detained as prisoners of conscience;
- expressing grave concern at the increased attacks on human rights defenders, lawyers and NGO activists and their relatives, and calling on the Tunisian authorities to put an immediate end to such practices and to allow all human rights defenders to carry out their activities freely, in compliance with international human rights treaties ratified by Tunisia;

- urging the authorities to conduct prompt, full and impartial investigations into the beating and ill-treatment of journalists, lawyers and human rights activists on 25 and 26 April and to bring those responsible to justice.

APPEALS TO:

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COPIES TO:

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and to diplomatic representatives of Tunisia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 15 June 2000.