

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 30/25/00

19 October 2000

Further information on UA 297/00 (MDE 30/22/00, 26 September 2000) and follow-ups (MDE 30/23/00, 2 October 2000) and (MDE 30/24/00, 12 October 2000) - Health concern

New concern: Ill-treatment

TUNISIA Fathi Karraoud

Abdelatif Bouhajila

Yacine Ben Zarti

Zuhair Yacoub

Abdallah Drissa

Noureddine Amdouni

Soufiane Hammami

Bashir Boujenah

Choukri Gargouri

At least 20 others

New name: Maher al-Khalsi

Some of the prisoners on hunger strike in Tunisia have been ill-treated by the prison authorities. All the prisoners report that their detention conditions have worsened, and that they were not seen by a medical doctor until they had been on hunger strike for more than one month.

Abdelatif Bouhajila, who has now been on hunger strike for 53 days, was placed in solitary confinement on 1 October. He was chained for five days and had to sleep on a concrete floor. He was also beaten and verbally abused. His lawyer visited him on 17 October, and says that he was confined to a wheelchair. He reportedly suffers severe pain in his feet, and there is concern that he might never walk again.

Fathi Karraoud, who has been on hunger strike for 47 days, has reportedly lost all feeling in the left side of his body. When visited by his lawyer on 17 October, he had to be carried to the interview room by two other prisoners. He said that he will continue his hunger strike until he dies, unless he is released. A doctor, who examined him last week, asked the prison authorities to transfer him to the infirmary, but they refused to do so.

Yacine Ben Zarti and Abdallah Drissa, who have been on hunger strike for 44 days, have both been unable to walk for several days: On 17 October Yacine Ben Zarti was seen being carried by a member of prison staff. Abdallah Drissa was seen in a wheelchair on 13 October.

Maher al-Khalsi, who has been detained since 1994 and is sentenced to more than thirty years' imprisonment on charges of links with *al-Nahda*, an unauthorized Islamist group, began a hunger strike on 2 October. He is just one of the many prisoners who have recently joined the hunger strike in protest at poor prison conditions. The hunger strike has now spread from prisons in Tunis to prisons in other areas, for example in Sfax and Kairouan.

Zuhair Yacoub stopped his hunger strike on 4 October after catching scabies. He had not eaten for a month. His detention conditions have reportedly improved slightly.

Thank you to all those who sent appeals. We believe that your appeals have contributed to allowing the lawyers to gain access to their clients.

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

- expressing concern about the health of the prisoners named above;
- expressing concern at Abdelatif Bouhajila's ill-treatment, and urging that his allegations are promptly and fully investigated.
- calling for all prisoners on hunger strike to be given prompt and regular access to their families and lawyers;
- calling for all prisoners on hunger strike to be given appropriate medical care.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Interior

M. Abdallah KALLEL

Ministre de l'Intérieur

Ministère de l'Intérieur

Avenue Habib Bourguiba

1001 Tunis, Tunisia

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Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Your Excellency

Presidential Councillor for Human Rights

M. Dali JAZI

Conseiller Spécial auprès du Président de la République,
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Palais Présidentiel

Tunis

Tunisia

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Salutation: Monsieur le Conseiller / Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Tunisian Human Rights League

Taoufik Bouderbala

Président

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1069 Tunis

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Salutation: Monsieur le Président

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 29 November 2000.