

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 30/28/00

29 November 2000

Further information on UA 297/00 (MDE 30/22/00, 26 September 2000) and follow-ups (MDE 30/23/00, 2 October 2000; MDE 30/24/00, 12 October 2000; MDE 30/25/00, 19 October 2000; MDE 30/26/00, 30 October 2000) - Health concern / Ill-treatment

TUNISIA Fathi Karraoud

Abdelatif Bouhajila

Yacine Ben Zarti

Zuhair Yacoub

Abdallah Drissa

Lotfi Amdouni (called Nouredine Amdouni previously)

Soufiane Hammami

Bashir Boujenah

Choukri Gargouri

Maher al-Khalsi

Lotfi Ferharti

More than 70 others

New names: Bachir Abid

Bouraoui Makhoulf

Several of the Tunisian prisoners on hunger strike have ended their protest, but many are suffering severe health problems as a result of not eating for so long. Neither the prisoners who are still on hunger strike, nor those who have ended their hunger strikes are getting the medical care that they need.

Abdellatif Bouhajila and Yacine Ben Zarti ended their hunger strike earlier this week after not eating for respectively 92 and 80 days. Both are in very poor physical condition and are not getting vital medical attention. At their trial on 24 November, they had to be brought to the court on stretchers and laid out on benches, as they were unable to support themselves. Nevertheless, the judge refused their lawyers' request for the trial to be postponed and for them to be given immediate medical care. The defence lawyers walked out in protest, but the trial went ahead, although the defendants were unable to answer or even understand questions due to their physical condition. Abdellatif Bouhajila and Yacine Ben Zarti were sentenced to 17 and 11 years' imprisonment respectively. They had been charged with setting up and participating in an Islamist criminal gang aiming at undermining state security.

Fathi Karraoud, Zuhair Yacoub, Soufiane Hammami, Bashir Boujenah, Choukri Gargouri, Maher al-Khalsi and Lotfi Ferharti are also believed to have ended their hunger strike. It is not known what their physical condition is like, as their lawyers and families have not been allowed access to them, but it is believed that they are not getting the necessary medical care.

Abdallah Drissa and Lotfi Amdouni are continuing their hunger strike, which they began on 11 and 30 September respectively. They are both reported to be in a critical physical condition. Abdallah Drissa, who is diabetic, has recently developed a skin condition, which is worsening due to lack of treatment. Like many of the other prisoners on hunger strike, they have been denied visits by their families for weeks at a time.

Bachir Abid, who has been on hunger strike since 18 October, is also reported to be in a critical physical condition, at times vomiting blood. His lawyers

have not been allowed to visit him since he was arrested on 26 September. He had been in hiding since 1999, when he was sentenced to 18-months' imprisonment for having links with an unauthorized party, *Parti communiste des ouvriers tunisiens* (PCOT), Tunisian Workers' Communist Party.

Bouraoui Makhoulouf, an Islamist activist who has been detained since the early 1990s, joined the hunger strikers at Mahdia Prison on 7 November. He is one of many Islamist prisoners in Madhia and other Tunisian prisons, who began hunger strikes to call for their release. They had hoped to be released on the occasion of a celebration on 7 November to mark the anniversary of President Ben Ali's coming to power in 1987.

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

- expressing concern for the health of prisoners who have ended their hunger strike, including Abdellatif Bouhajila and Yacine Ben Zarti, urging that they are immediately given the necessary medical care, and that they are granted prompt and regular access to their families and lawyers;
- expressing concern for the health of prisoners currently on hunger strike, seeking assurances that they are kept under medical surveillance, given appropriate medical care and granted prompt and regular access to their families and lawyers.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Interior

M. Abdallah KALLEL
Ministre de l'Intérieur
Ministère de l'Intérieur
Avenue Habib Bourguiba
1001 Tunis, Tunisia

Telegram: Ministre Interieur, Tunis, Tunisia

Fax: + 216 1 340 888

E-mail: mint@ministeres.tn

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Your Excellency

Presidential Councillor for Human Rights

M. Dali JAZI
Conseiller Spécial auprès du Président de la République,
chargé des droits de l'homme
Palais Présidentiel
Tunis
Tunisia

Fax: + 216 1 571314

Salutation: Monsieur le Conseiller / Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

M. Afif Hendaoui
Ministre Délégué chargé des Droits de l'Homme
Bureau du Premier Ministre
Place du Gouvernement
La Kasbah
1006 Tunis
Tunisia

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 10 January 2001.