

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 30/05/98

UA 59/98

Fear of torture/Ill-treatment

24 February 1998

TUNISIA Qais OUISLATI

Noureddine BENTICHA

Ali JALLOULI

Lotfi HAMMAMI

Taha SASSI

Sabri BEN BELGACEM      All six are university students

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Amnesty International fears that Qais Ouislati, Noureddine Benticha, Ali Jallouli, Lotfi Hammami, Taha Sassi and Sabri Ben Belgacem, who were arrested between 18 and 22 February 1998, and who continue to be held in secret detention, may be at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

According to information received by Amnesty International, Qais Ouislati was arrested on 18 February, Noureddine Benticha on 20 February, Ali Jallouli and Taha Sassi on 21 February and Lotfi Hammami and Sabri Ben Belgacem on 22 February. To date the security forces and the authorities have refused to provide any information to their lawyers and families on their whereabouts or legal status.

The arrest of these students is reported to be linked to student strikes and meetings that were calling for better conditions, which took place last week in Tunis, and in a number of other cities. Amnesty International has also received information about other students who have also been arrested, though no details could be obtained about their cases. Some of these students had previously been arrested and detained as prisoners of conscience (see previous UAs).

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Periodical arrests of students involved in student union activities is common in Tunisia, where detention of prisoners of conscience is widespread. Over the past year thousands of government opponents and critics have been detained as prisoners of conscience for the peaceful expression of their beliefs. Torture and ill-treatment is often used against these detainees, especially in the days immediately after arrest, when detainees are held in secret detention without access to their families, lawyers, or to anyone else in the outside world.

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

- expressing concerns that Qais Ouislati, Noureddine Benticha, Ali Jallouli, Lotfi HAMMAMI, Taha Sassi and Sabri Ben Belgacem are being held in secret detention and that they may be at risk of torture or ill-treatment;
- urging that their families and lawyers be immediately informed of their place of detention and legal status and that they be allowed prompt access to their families and lawyers and to medical care if necessary;
- urging that they be released immediately and unconditionally if they are held as prisoners of conscience.

#### APPEALS TO:

1) Minister of Justice  
M. Abdallah Kallel  
Ministre de la Justice  
Ministère de la Justice  
31 Boulevard Bab Benat

2

1006 Tunis

Tunisia

**Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Tunis, Tunisia**

**Faxes: + 216 1 568 106**

**Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Your Excellency**

2) Minister of the Interior

M. Ali Chaouch

Ministre de l'Intérieur

Ministère de l'Intérieur

Avenue Habib Bourguiba

1001 Tunis

Tunisie

**Telegrams: Ministre Intérieur, Tunis, Tunisia**

**Faxes: + 216 1 346 624**

**Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Your Excellency**

**COPIES TO:**

Tunisian Human Rights League

Me Taoufik Bouderbala, Président

Ligue Tunisienne des Droits de l'Homme, LTDH

7 Rue Pierre Curie

Tunis

Tunisia

**Tel/fax: + 216 1 336 338**

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 7 April 1998.