

AI: INDEX MDE 30/50/96  
31 DECEMBER 1996

News Service 250/96

TUNISIA: CONDITIONAL RELEASE OF TWO PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

Amnesty International welcomed the release yesterday 30 December of Mohamed Mouadda and Khemais Chammari, but noted with regret that their release was conditional.

“While we welcome the release of these two men, we believe they should never have been arrested in the first place”, Amnesty International said today. “They were both prisoners of conscience and we are calling on the Tunisian Government to drop all conditions connected with their release.”

Mohamed Moadda, leader of the opposition party le Mouvement des Democraties Socialistes (MDS) was accused of threatening the external security of the state and intelligence with agents of a foreign power aiming at undermining Tunisia. He was sentenced to 11 years’ imprisonment, following a trial attended by an Amnesty International observer whose proceedings were clearly in violation of international human rights treaties ratified by Tunisia.

Khemais Chammari, a human rights activist and former MDS official and member of parliament, was sentenced in July to five years’ imprisonment on charges of “disclosing a national secret to a foreign power”. An Amnesty International observer who attended his trial concluded that no convincing evidence was produced to substantiate the charges against him and that he was imprisoned for his non-violent political activities and human rights work. Amnesty International’s Secretary General, Pierre Sané, had requested to visit Khemais Chammari during a visit to Tunisia in June, but the request was refused by the Tunisian Government.

ENDS/