

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of torture / Legal concern

28 November 1994

ALGERIA Abdelkrim MAMMERI, Head of Personnel at the Ministry of Justice

Amnesty International fears that Abdelkrim Mammeri is at serious risk of torture in custody, and that his incommunicado detention may be extended for a period that could exceed several months. It has already exceeded the 12-day maximum permitted under Algerian law.

At 1am on 12 November 1994, Abdelkrim Mammeri was taken in his nightclothes from his home in Algiers by four men, two in military police uniforms and two in civilian clothing. The men reportedly ill-treated members of his family, searched his flat and took some money before leaving with him.

Abdelkrim Mammeri has not been seen since his arrest and, despite inquiries made with the authorities by Amnesty International and his family, his whereabouts and legal status remain unknown.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The level of political violence in Algeria has continued to spiral over the last year. Human rights violations by the security forces and abuses carried out by armed Islamist opposition groups multiply daily, with both sides bearing responsibility for the brutal killing of thousands of civilians.

As law and order in Algeria continues to break down, the torture and ill-treatment of detainees held in incommunicado detention for weeks and months has become common practice. When carrying out arrests, members of the security forces, often dressed in civilian clothes, do not produce warrants or provide proof of their identity, and they systematically refuse to give any information to the families of detainees. Families frequently have no way of knowing if their relatives have been arrested by the security forces or abducted by members of an armed group posing as security forces personnel. It is often only when the detaining authority (which may be the police, the *gendarmerie* or military security personnel) acknowledges holding the detainees, or when they reappear weeks or months later in front of a magistrate or in prison, that their fate and whereabouts can be ascertained.

Torture is systematically practiced against detainees held in incommunicado detention, mainly in order to extract confessions of their alleged participation and that of others in killings and other attacks against individuals or properties. Methods used are savage and include suffocation with chemical fluids, suspension in contorted positions for prolonged periods, electric shocks, burning of the skin with a blowtorch, sexual abuse and mock executions; detainees have also had holes drilled in their back, feet or legs with a drill.

Scores of detainees have died in custody as a result of torture since early 1992 and Amnesty International's requests to the authorities to investigate these cases have been ignored.

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

- expressing grave concern that Abdelkrim Mammeri's incommunicado (*garde à vue*) detention has already exceeded the maximum 12-day period permitted under Algerian law and in breach of international standards, stressing that Article 9(3) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ICCPR, to

which Algeria is a state party, states that: "Anyone arrested or detained on a criminal charge shall be brought promptly before a judge...";

- expressing grave concern that he is at serious risk of torture while held in incommunicado detention (you may state that Amnesty International has repeatedly raised its concerns with the authorities about the systematic torture of detainees held incommunicado by members of the security forces);

- urging the authorities to clarify his whereabouts and legal status to his family and to allow them immediate access to him; and to allow him immediate access to legal counsel and medical care as necessary.

APPEALS TO

1) President

M. Lamine ZEROUAL
Président de l'Etat
Présidence de la République
El Mouradia
Alger, Algérie

Telegrams: Président Zéroual, Alger, Algérie

Telexes: 66044/66088

Faxes: + 213 2 60 96 18

Salutation: Monsieur le Président/Dear President

2) Minister of Justice

M. Mohamed TEGUIA
Ministre de la Justice
Ministère de la Justice
8 Place Bir Hakem
El-Biar
Alger, Algérie

Telegrams: Ministre Téguia, Alger, Algérie

Telexes: 61498

Faxes: + 213 2 796557

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister

3) Minister of Interior

M. Abderrahmane Meziane CHERIF
Ministre de l'Intérieur
Ministère de l'Intérieur
18 rue Docteur Saâdane
Alger, Algérie

Telegrams: Ministre Chérif, Alger, Algérie

Telexes: 66341

Faxes: + 213 2 736106

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Organizations:

Observatoire national des droits de l'homme
Palais du Peuple
Avenue F. Roosevelt
Alger, Algérie
Faxes: + 213 2 601042

Ligue algérienne pour la défense des droits de l'homme
19 rue Abane Ramdane
Alger, Algérie

and to diplomatic representatives of Algeria accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 6 January 1995.