

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: MDE 30/10/91  
Distr: UA/SC

UA 98/91 Fear of Torture in Incommunicado Detention

13 March 1991

TUNISIA: Nouredin BHIRI

---

Amnesty International is concerned that the Tunisian lawyer Nouredin Bhiri has been held in garde à vue incommunicado detention for 20 days and may be at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

Nouredin Bhiri was arrested without warrant on 20 February 1991 from his office. He has since been held in garde à vue detention beyond the maximum 10-day period allowed under Tunisian law without access to family or legal counsel. His wife, also a practising lawyer, questioned the legality of his arrest with the arresting officers who failed to produce any warrant. Since then she has repeatedly sought information on his whereabouts without success.

Amnesty International is concerned that he may be at risk of torture or ill-treatment, especially in the light of the numerous reports of torture and ill-treatment in garde à vue detention received over the past few months.

Over the last five months several hundred supporters and suspected sympathizers of the non-recognized Islamic group Hizb al-Nahda have been arrested. Many, especially those held in garde à vue detention beyond the 10-day legal period, have alleged that they were tortured or ill-treated in police custody. Amnesty International is also concerned that Nouredin Bhiri may have been detained for the non-violent exercise of his right to freedom of expression and that he may therefore be a prisoner of conscience.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters, in French or Arabic if possible:**

- expressing concern that Nouredin Bhiri has been held for 20 days in garde à vue incommunicado detention, and that he is at risk of torture or ill-treatment;
- asking the reason for his arrest and details of any charge or pending trial procedures against him;
- urging that if he is not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and promptly brought to trial, he be released;
- urging the government to immediately reveal the whereabouts of Nouredin Bhiri and to allow him prompt access to legal counsel, to his family, and to medical care if necessary.

**APPEALS TO:**

Son Excellence  
Président Zine El Abidine Ben Ali  
Président de la République  
Palais Présidentiel

Tunis/Carthage, Tunisia

**Telexes:** 14900 PRPSA TN; 12163 PPSD TN  
**Faxes:** 216 1 744721  
**Telegrams:** President Ben Ali, Tunis, Tunisia

M. Abdallah Kallel  
Ministre de l'Interieur  
Ministère de l'Interieur  
Place du Gouvernement  
Tunis, Tunisie

**Telexes:** 13662 SDAP TN  
**Telegrams:** Ministre Interieur, Tunis, Tunisia

M. Abderrahim Zouari  
Ministre de la Justice  
Ministère de la Justice  
Boulevard Bab Benat Tunis

**Telegrams:** Ministre Justice, Tunis, Tunisia  
**Telexes:** (via Ministre de l'Extérieur) 13000 MAET TN

**COPIES TO:** Diplomatic representatives of Tunisia in your country.

**PLEASE SEND ALSO COPIES OF SOME OF YOUR APPEALS, FOR INFORMATION, TO:**

Ligue Tunisienne pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme  
1, rue Canada  
Tunis, Tunisia

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat or your section Office if sending appeals after 24 April 1991.