

# URGENT ACTION

## TUNISIAN DETAINED AFTER FORCIBLE RETURN

**Tunisian national Ali Ben Sassi Toumi has been held incommunicado since being forcibly returned from Italy on 2 August. His relatives have not been informed of his whereabouts, and he is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.**

**Ali Ben Sassi Toumi**, aged 44, was arrested at the airport in the Tunisian capital, Tunis, following his forcible return from Italy. He sent an SMS (text) message to his wife in Italy to say that he had arrived, but he did not meet a friend who was waiting for him at the airport, and his family has not heard from him since. He is believed to be held at the Department of State Security (DSS) of the Ministry of Interior in Tunis. Detainees held incommunicado there are at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

The Tunisian authorities have not informed any of Ali Ben Sassi Toumi's immediate relatives in Tunisia about the reasons for and place of his detention, as required under Tunisian law, despite inquiries from his lawyer.

Ali Ben Sassi Toumi was released from prison in Benevento, Italy, on 18 May, after serving four years of a six-year sentence on charges of belonging to a terrorist cell in Italy and recruiting fighters for the insurgency in Iraq. He applied for asylum in Italy, but his claim was rejected on the basis that he had been convicted of committing a "serious crime". He had been held in an immigration detention centre known as an Identification and Expulsion Centre (*Centro di identificazione ed espulsione*) in Isola di Capo Rizzuto in the Province of Crotona, south-east Italy, since his release from prison. He was forcibly returned despite the European Court of Human Rights calling three times on the Italian authorities to stay the deportation, on the grounds that he was at risk of torture and other ill-treatment in Tunisia.

### **PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English, Arabic or your own language:**

- urging the authorities to disclose Ali Ben Sassi Toumi's whereabouts immediately, and give him access to a lawyer of his choice, his family and any medical attention he may require;
- urging them to ensure that he is not tortured or otherwise ill-treated;
- urging them to release Ali Ben Sassi Toumi immediately and unconditionally, unless he is promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offence and brought to trial in proceedings that meet international standards for fair trial.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 16 SEPTEMBER 2009 TO:**

Minister of Interior  
Rafik Haj Kacem  
Ministry of Interior  
Avenue Habib Bourguiba  
1000 Tunis  
Tunisia  
**Fax: + 216 71 340 888**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Minister of Justice and Human  
Rights  
Béchar Tekkari  
Ministry of Justice and Human  
Rights  
31 Boulevard Bab Benat  
1006 Tunis - La Kasbah  
Tunisia  
**Fax: + 216 71 568 106**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**And copies to:**  
Ridha Khemakhem  
General Coordinator for Human  
Rights  
Ministry of Justice and Human  
Rights  
31 Boulevard Bab Benat  
1006 Tunis - La Kasbah  
Tunisia  
**Salutation: Dear Sir**

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.** Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



# URGENT ACTION

## TUNISIAN DETAINED AFTER FORCIBLE RETURN

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Over the years, Amnesty International has received numerous reports of torture and other ill-treatment by the Tunisian security forces. In virtually all cases, allegations of torture are not investigated and the perpetrators are not brought to justice. Individuals are most at risk of torture when in incommunicado detention. The most commonly reported methods of torture are beatings on the body, especially the soles of the feet; suspension by the ankles or in contorted positions; electric shocks; and burning with cigarettes. There are also reports of mock executions, sexual abuse, including rape with bottles and sticks, and threats of sexual abuse of female relatives.

As a state party to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Tunisia is under an obligation to prevent torture and to "ensure that its competent authorities proceed to a prompt and impartial investigation, wherever there is reasonable ground to believe that an act of torture has been committed in any territory under its jurisdiction".

UA: 210/09 Index: MDE 30/009/2009 Issue Date: 05 August 2009

