

Further information on UA 08/07 (MDE 28/001/2007, 5 January 2007) - Secret detention/fear of torture/medical concern

**ALGERIA**      **Abderhamane Mehalli (m), aged 29**

Abderhamane Mehalli was brought before a judge in the capital, Algiers, on 6 January and charged with belonging to a terrorist group and failing to denounce a criminal to the authorities. The charges appear to arise from his supposedly having contact with his brother, Bedrane, who joined an Islamist armed group in 1993. After the court hearing he was taken to Serkadji prison, Algiers. In prison he is in far less immediate danger of ill-treatment or torture.

He had been held for 11 days without any contact with the outside world, at an undisclosed location believed to be the barracks of the military intelligence agency *Département du renseignement et de la sécurité*, DRS, the Department for Information and Security, in Algiers.

In court Abderhamane Mehalli reportedly appeared to be in fragile health and distressed. When the judge asked him about the conditions he had been held in, he apparently replied that he had been tortured but that he could not say any more for fear of being taken back to the barracks of the DRS. There have been persistent allegations of such practices in DRS barracks.

He admitted to the charges against him, but there are concerns that he did so under coercion. The security force officials who escorted him to the court apparently threatened him with being returned to the barracks and subjected to further ill-treatment if he did not do so. Abderhamane Mehalli was accompanied by a lawyer when he appeared before the judge, but was not permitted time to consult with him before the hearing.

**No further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.**

**Amnesty International will continue to monitor Abderhamane Mehalli's case, and take further campaigning action as necessary.\*\*\*\*\***