

EXTERNAL

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"Disappearance"

10 July 1997

ALGERIA Messaoud OUZIALA, aged 41, medical doctor

Dr Messaoud Ouziala, a kidney transplant surgeon, is reported to have been abducted on 8 July 1997 after he left the Mustapha Hospital in Central Algiers, where he works. He has not been seen since.

After his abduction, his wife, also a medical doctor, and other members of his family contacted the security services to register a complaint of "disappearance", but the security services reportedly refused to register the complaint.

At the end of June 1997, Dr Ouziala, a former FIS mayor elected in 1990 and father of two children, had received a summons from the police station in the Ain Taya suburb of Algiers, where he lives. When he went to the police station he was questioned in what appeared to be a routine procedure and then released without charge. Dr Ouziala had previously been arrested in February 1992 and detained administratively, without charge or trial, for almost four years in a desert camp in the south of Algeria; he was then released without charge in December 1995. In February 1996 he resumed his work as a kidney transplant surgeon at Mustapha Hospital.

It is not known if Dr Ouziala was taken by the security forces, by a paramilitary militia group or by an unknown armed group. Amnesty International is concerned for his safety and calls on the Algerian authorities to ensure that a thorough investigation is promptly carried out to establish his whereabouts.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the past four years tens of thousands of people have been killed in Algeria by security forces, paramilitary militia groups and by armed opposition groups which define themselves as "Islamic groups". Tens of thousands have been arrested and hundreds have "disappeared" after arrest. Members of the security forces carrying out arrests do not in most cases wear uniforms or identify themselves as security forces, and, if contacted by the relatives of those detained, usually deny all knowledge of the detained persons. Thus families of those detained have no way of obtaining any information on their detained relatives until these are brought before the courts, often weeks or even months after the arrest. In the cases where those arrested have "disappeared", most remain unaccounted for, but some were later found dead or were reported to have been killed in circumstances which were never clarified. On the other hand, individuals abducted by armed groups such as the *Groupe islamique armé* (Armed Islamic Group), GIA, have in most cases been found dead, but some remain unaccounted for.

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

- expressing concern at the "disappearance" of Dr Messaoud Ouziala and urging the authorities to ensure that a thorough investigation be promptly carried out to establish his whereabouts.

APPEALS TO:

M. Mustafa BENMANSOUR
Ministre de l'Intérieur

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Ministère de l'Intérieur
18 rue Docteur Saâdane
Alger
Algérie
Fax: +213 2 736106
Telegrams: Ministre Interieur, Alger, Algeria
Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre

M. Mohamed ADAMI
Ministre de la Justice
Ministère de la Justice
8 Place Bir Hakem
El-Biar, Alger
Algérie
Fax: +213 2 922560, 925557, 796557, 722560
Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Alger, Algeria
Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre

COPIES TO:

M. Kamel REZZAG-BARA
President
Observatoire National des Droits de l'Homme (ONDH)
Palais du Peuple
1 Av. Franklin Roosevelt
Alger
Algérie
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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 24 August 1997.