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TUNISIA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNS UNFAIR TRIAL OF MOHAMED MOUADDA

Amnesty International today expressed concern about the conviction of Mohamed Mouadda, leader of the opposition party *Mouvement des Démocrates Socialistes*, Movement of Democratic Socialists (MDS), after an unfair trial yesterday before the appeal court in Tunis. The sentence of 11 years' imprisonment was passed today at 2 am.

An observer from the organization was present at the trial of Mohamed Mouadda, who was accused of threatening the external security of the state and intelligence with agents of a foreign power aiming at undermining Tunisia.

“The trial proceedings fell short of standards for fair trial and violated international human rights standards ratified by Tunisia,” Amnesty International said.

The right to defence was markedly curtailed. Amnesty International noted that the request by the defence lawyers to call witnesses was not met by the court, and that no convincing evidence was produced to substantiate the charges against the accused.

The organization had expressed its concern about Mohamed Mouadda's arrest on 9 October 1995, the day after the MDS has made public a letter, signed by Mohamed Mouadda and addressed to the President of the Republic, raising concerns about grave violations of fundamental liberties and restrictions on political activities.

Mohamed Mouadda does not have full right to appeal, given that he was tried in first instance by the criminal chamber of the appeal court. He may seek review by cassation before the Supreme Court, which only examines points of law and does not reexamine the facts.

“This procedure fails to satisfy the right to appeal guaranteed by Article 14 (5) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) ratified by Tunisia,” Amnesty International said.

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