

EXTERNAL

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"Disappearance" / Fear of ill-treatment /  
Prisoner of Conscience / Health concern

18 February 1997

TUNISIA Abdelmajid Sahraoui, trade unionist (suspended)

Abdelmajid Sahraoui has been held in secret detention since his arrest on 17 February 1997 and his current whereabouts are unknown. Amnesty International is concerned at the news of his arrest, as he is known to have been in poor health, and believes he is a prisoner of conscience.

Abdelmajid Sahraoui, an employee of the TRAPSA petroleum company and former member of executive bureau of the *Union générale des travailleurs tunisiens*, UGTT, (Tunisian General Workers' Union), was arrested on the morning of 17 February as he arrived at work. His arrest is believed to be connected to a letter that he and three other former members of the executive bureau of the UGTT had sent to the head of the union concerning its internal affairs, and for which he was suspended from the union.

Abdelmajid Sahraoui's lawyer has enquired of the Public Prosecutor in Tunis the reasons for his arrest and detention. No response has been forthcoming to date.

Abdelmajid Sahraoui was previously arrested on 24 January 1997, also reportedly in connection with the letter written to the head of the UGTT. He was released 24 hours later, but was reportedly still being sought by police. On one occasion they came to his house, but he managed to evade arrest by jumping from a window.

Abdelmajid Sahraoui's relatives have been subjected to harassment by the authorities since his arrest on 24 January. Both his fiancée and his parents have been questioned about his activities, and his brother's house was searched by police.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Arrests, detentions, torture and ill-treatment, imprisonment of prisoners of conscience, unfair trials and systematic harassment have been increasingly used in Tunisia to punish, intimidate and silence opposition political activists, government critics, human rights activists and others in Tunisia over the past few years.

Amnesty International has continued to document and condemn such human rights violations in Tunisia, and to call on the Tunisian authorities to take concrete steps to put an end to such practices. In the past few weeks five well-known prisoners of conscience who were serving sentences of up to 11 years were conditionally released. However, they are prevented from exercising their civil rights and remain under close surveillance; at least one of them has been rearrested and held for one night in the Ministry of the Interior. Amnesty International has welcomed the release of these prisoners of conscience as a positive step, and continues to call for the release of the large numbers of remaining prisoners of conscience and for measures to be taken to end the ongoing human rights violations in Tunisia.

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

- expressing concern at the "disappearance" of Abdelmajid Sahraoui after his arrest on 17 February 1997, and seeking information about his current place of detention and legal status;

- urging that he be immediately and unconditionally released as a prisoner of conscience;
- expressing concern that he may be at risk of ill-treatment whilst he is held in secret detention, and asking that he be allowed access to his family, lawyers and to independent medical assistance if necessary.

**APPEALS TO:**

1) Minister of Justice

M. Sadok Chaâbane  
Ministre de la Justice  
Ministère de la Justice  
Boulevard Bab Benat  
Tunis, Tunisia

**Faxes: +216 1 568 106**

**Telexes: 13000 maet tn (via Ministère de l'Intérieur)**

**Telegrams: Ministre de la Justice Chaâbane, Tunis, Tunisie**

**Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Your Excellency**

2) Minister of the Interior

M. Mohamed Jegham  
Ministre de l'Intérieur  
Ministère de l'Intérieur  
Av. Habib Bourguiba  
Tunis , Tunisia

**Fax: +216 1 340888**

**Telegrams: Ministre de l'Interieur, Tunis, Tunisia**

**Telex: 13662 sdap tn**

**Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Your Excellency**

**COPIES TO:**

Tunisian Human Rights League

Me Taoufik Bouderbala, Président

**Ligue Tunisienne des Droits de l'Homme, LTDH**

7 Rue Pierre Curie

TUNIS, Tunisia

**Faxes: + 216 1 336 338**

and to diplomatic representatives of Tunisia accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 21 March 1997.