

13 March 1998

Further information on UA 59/98 (MDE 30/05/98, 24 February 98) and follow-ups (MDE 30/06/98, 26 February 1998 and MDE 30/07/98, 6 March 1998) - Fear of Torture / Ill-treatment / Fear of further possible arrests / Prisoners of conscience

TUNISIA Qais OUISLATI

Noureddine BENTICHA
Ali JALLOULI
Lotfi HAMMAMI
Taha SASSI
Jalal BOURAOUI
Jalloul OUISLATI (reportedly released)
Chedli HAMMAMI
Rachid TRABELSI
Bourhan GASMI
Miled BELANES (released on 6 March 1998)
Haikal MANNAI
Ridha OUISLATI
Habib HASNI (corrected name; previously as HARZI)

New Names: Hinda AAROUI (F)

Imen DEROUICHE (F)
Najib BACCOUCHI

Hamma HAMMAMI, husband of Radhia Nasraoui (charged in absentia)

Abdelmajid SAHRAOUI (charged in absentia)
Fahem BOUKADDOUS (Charged in absentia)
Radhia Nasraoui, lawyer representing the above
(charged in absentia)

Amnesty International has learned that two women, Hinda Aaroui and Imen Derouiche, and one man, Najib Baccouchi, a former prisoner of conscience, have also been arrested in connection with the wave of arrests that have taken place subsequent to the February student strikes.

All 15 of the above-named detainees have now been brought before the examining magistrate, charged and transferred to prison, the female detainees to the Mannouba Women's Prison in Tunis.

Charges against all of the accused include: belonging to a criminal and terrorist gang, holding unauthorized meetings, inciting rebellion, insulting the President, spreading false information aiming to disturb public order, defamation against the authorities and distributing leaflets.

Some of the detainees were held in secret detention after their initial arrests and subsequently reportedly tortured. Additionally, the arrest dates for some of the detainees were falsified to hide the length of time they spent in secret detention.

The same charges were also brought against four people, in absentia, on 11 March 1998 (see names above). Hamma Hammami, Abdelmajid Sahraoui, a trade unionist, and Fahem Boukaddous are all former prisoners of conscience and are being sought by the police. Radhia Nasraoui, a well-known human rights lawyer acting on behalf of those charged, is currently out of the country attending

a trial as part of an Amnesty International delegation (see UA 48/98, MDE 30/04/98, 13 February 1998).

Radhia Nasraoui was unable to gain access to her clients prior to her departure on 6 March 1998 or to ensure that they be medically examined.

Amnesty International considers the 15 above-mentioned detainees to be prisoners of conscience. The organization would consider the remaining four charged in absentia to be prisoners of conscience if they were to be imprisoned and calls for the charges against them to be dropped.

Miled Belanes was released without charge on 6 March 1998 and Jalloul Ouislali is also reported to have been released.

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

- expressing concern at the new arrests of Hinda Aaroui, Imen Derouiche and Najib Baccouchi;
- expressing concern at reports that some of the detainees have been tortured during secret detention, and urging that a prompt, independent and impartial investigation into the allegations of torture;
- expressing concern at the charges brought against Hamma Hammami, Abdelmajid Sahraoui, Fahem Boukaddous and Radhia Nasraoui;
- urging that the 15 above-mentioned detainees be immediately and unconditionally released, and that the charges against the other four be dropped.

APPEALS TO:

1) Minister of Justice

M. Abdallah Kallel
Ministre de la Justice
Ministère de la Justice
31 Boulevard Bab Benat
1006 Tunis, Tunisia

Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Tunis, Tunisia

Faxes: + 216 1 568 106

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Your Excellency

2) Minister of the Interior

M. Ali Chaouch
Ministre de l'Intérieur
Ministère de l'Intérieur
Avenue Habib Bourguiba
1001 Tunis, Tunisia

Telegrams: Ministre Intérieur, Tunis, Tunisia

Faxes: + 216 1 346 624

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

Tel/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 24 April 1998.