

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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9 May 1995

**TUNISIANajib El Baccouchi, member of the *Union Générale des Etudiants Tunisiens*,  
*UGET*, General Union of Tunisian Students**

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Amnesty International has received reports that Najib El Baccouchi has been subjected to cruel and degrading treatment during his hunger-strike which began on 22 April 1995. Since that date he has been held in an isolation cell, with one foot constantly chained. He has to sleep on the floor with only one blanket serving as mattress.

Najib El Baccouchi was tried in Tunis on 9 November 1994 by the *Tribunal de première instance*, without a lawyer. He was sentenced to three years' imprisonment and three years' administrative control (two and a half years for possession and distribution of a leaflet advocating racial hatred --Article 52bis of Tunisian law; and six months for organizing an unauthorized meeting -- Art. 52bis). In court he recognized organizing a meeting at a university, but denied possessing or distributing the leaflet and condemned its content as contrary to his long-standing political commitment. The defence lawyers were not given copies of the leaflet, and the prosecution failed to present any evidence that Najib El Baccouchi was responsible for writing or distributing it.

This is the third time since his trial that Najib El Baccouchi has been on hunger-strike, which have each been to protest against the charge of racism, which he denies, and against the fact that his appeal, originally set for 23 December 1994, kept being postponed (it was postponed seven times before it was finally heard on 28 March 1995). During each hunger-strike he has been punished in the way described above. At times he has also been barred from visits by his lawyers and family.

Amnesty International is concerned that Najib El Baccouchi is being subjected to cruel and degrading treatment for his decision to go on hunger-strike, and that he may be detained as a prisoner of conscience for his political activities in the student union. On the ninth day of a previous hunger-strike (which took place in January 1995), Najib El Baccouchi suffered from a kidney failure.

At this point he had to stop his hunger-strike as he was told by the prison authorities that he would only get an injection after he had resumed taking some food.

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

- deploring the fact that Najib El Baccouchi is being punished for his decision to go on hunger-strike, as well as the cruel, degrading and potentially dangerous manner in which he is being punished;
- urging the authorities to provide all necessary medical care to Najib El Baccouchi;
- seeking assurances that his rights of access to his lawyer and family will be fully maintained;
- expressing concern that Najib El Baccouchi may have been imprisoned as a prisoner of conscience, and urging that he be immediately and unconditionally released if this is the case.

**APPEALS TO:**

1) Minister of the Interior

M. Mohamed Jegham

Ministre de l'Intérieur

Ministère de l'Intérieur

Av Habib Bourguiba

Tunis, Tunisie

**Faxes: +216 1 340 888 (dialling tone may change before fax connects)****Telexes: 13662 sdap tn****Telegrams: Ministre de l'Intérieur, Tunis, Tunisie****Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Your Excellency**2) Minister of Justice

M. Sadok Chaâbane

Ministre de la Justice

Ministère de la Justice

Boulevard Bab Benat

Tunis, Tunisie

**Faxes: +216 1 568 106; 573 756****Telexes: 13000 maet tn (via Ministère de l'Intérieur)****Telegrams: Ministre de la Justice Chaâbane, Tunis, Tunisie****Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Your Excellency****COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

M. Salem Makki

**Conseiller Présidentiel chargé des droits de l'homme**

Palais Présidentiel

Carthage/Tunis

Tunisia

**Faxes: +216 1 731 009 or +216 1 742 513**

Me Taoufik Bouderbala, Président

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

21 Rue Imam el Bakri

1002 TUNIS Belvedere

Tunisia

**Fax: +216 1 801 599**

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 20 June 1995.