

PUBLIC

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Further information on UA 270/96 (MDE 30/39/96, 21 November 1996) and follow-ups (MDE 30/44/96, 11 December 1996 and MDE 30/33/97, 30 May 1997) - Fear of torture/ Legal concern/ Prisoner of conscience

TUNISIA Radhia Aouididi (f), aged 28

On 25 May 1998, Radhia Aouididi was sentenced to three and half years imprisonment on charges of criminal conspiracy, forgery and possession of false documents after an unfair trial. Her lawyers will now petition the Court of Cassation as there is no full right to appeal against a sentence given by the criminal chamber of the Appeal Court.

Radhia Aouididi was arrested on 9 November 1996 at Tunis-Carthage airport and reportedly found to be in possession of a false Belgian passport. She had been intending to travel to France to be reunited with her fiancé who has refugee status there.

She was initially held in *garde à vue* (incommunicado) detention beyond the 10-day limit permitted by Tunisian law, during which time she was beaten, ill-treated and threatened with rape. In December 1996 she was transferred to Mannouba women's prison in Tunis, where she continues to be held.

Radhia Aouididi had been subjected to periodic harassment at the hands of the security forces in Tunisia prior to her arrest. She had been arrested and detained briefly on two occasions in 1984 and 1987, during which she was ill-treated and interrogated about the political activities of other members of her family and her fiancé.

Radhia Aouididi had been refused a passport and also had her identity card confiscated denying her the possibility of leaving the country through legal means.

No further appeals by the urgent action network are required though Amnesty International is continuing to work for the release of prisoner of conscience Radhia Aouididi through other action forms and will keep the network informed of any developments in this case. Thank you to all who wrote appeals on her behalf.