

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 30/14/96

EXTRA 71/96 Legal Concern / Probable Prisoner of Conscience 20 May 1996

TUNISIA Khemais CHAMMARI, human rights activist, parliamentarian

Amnesty International is concerned at the arrest on 18 May 1996 of Khemais Chammari, a prominent human rights activist and a member of the Tunisian parliament, representing the opposition party *Mouvement des Démocrates Socialistes* (MDS, Social Democratic Movement).

In October 1995 a case was brought against Khemais Chammari and his wife, Aliya Cherif-Chammari, for "*divulgarion du secret de l'instruction*" (disclosure of confidential information) in the judicial inquiry concerning Mohamed Mouadda, President of the MDS. Mohamed Mouadda was later sentenced to two years' imprisonment for unauthorized possession of foreign currency, and to 11 years' imprisonment for secret relations with agents of a foreign power aiming at undermining Tunisia (see follow-ups to EXTRA 118/95 - MDE 30/04/96, 6 February 1996 and MDE 30/07/96, 22 March). Mohamed Mouadda has been adopted as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International.

After the case was brought against them, Khemais Chammari and his wife were prevented from travelling abroad, and their passports were confiscated in October 1995. They were also placed under strict police surveillance, and Khemais Chammari's parliamentary immunity was suspended on 14 November 1995.

Khemais Chammari has been heard by the investigating judge several times but has not been arrested before in connection with the Mouadda case.

His current arrest may have been sparked by his consistent refusal to stop his political and human rights work, and in particular could be related to the recent case against Tunisian human rights activist Frej Fenniche (see EXTRA 64/96, MDE 30/12/96, 13 May 1996 and MDE 30/13/96, 16 May). Frej Fenniche (who has been charged with possessing documents deemed to be damaging to national interests and is free pending the completion of the judicial inquiry) was allegedly in possession of letters from Khemais Chammari which described the human rights situation in Tunisia and which were intended for participants in a human rights meeting in Montpellier, France.

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. However, despite the Tunisian Government's public statements about its commitment to respecting human rights, human rights activists have continued to be arrested and harassed.

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

- expressing concern at the arrest of Khemais Chammari;
- seeking assurance that he is being treated humanely in accordance with international standards for the treatment of detainees, and that he is allowed access to his lawyers and family;

- urging that he be immediately and unconditionally released if he is being held solely on account of his peaceful political and human rights activities.

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

Faxes: +216 1 340888

Telegrams: Ministre Interieur, Tunis, Tunisia

Telexes: 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

21 Rue Imam el Bakri

1002 TUNIS Belvedere, Tunisia

Faxes: +216 1 801 599

Mouvement des Démocrates Socialistes

26, Rue d'Angleterre

B.P. 1000

TUNIS, Tunisia

Fax: +216 1 347631

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 1 July 1996.