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Tunisia: Government addresses plight of wives and children of exiled political opponents

Amnesty International today welcomed the recent positive measures taken by the Tunisian Government to address the plight of wives and children of Tunisian political refugees.

At least 35 women and their children have been given passports and allowed to leave Tunisia to join their exiled husbands -- political opponents who fled Tunisia five or six years ago and sought refuge in different countries.

“For years women have been detained and subjected to ill-treatment in Tunisia as a means of putting pressure on their exiled husbands,” Amnesty International said today. “Now the nightmare is over for at least these women and their children, and these families can be finally reunited.”

These women were often arrested and questioned about their contacts with their husbands abroad, visited by police at their homes in the middle of the night and forced to report to the police on a regular basis. They were unable to work, prevented from travelling inside Tunisia, and at times even within the country, and were under pressure to break off all contacts with their exiled husbands -- and in some cases even forced to divorce.

“This is a very positive development and these measures go some way to addressing the widespread human rights problem in Tunisia,” Amnesty International said. “We hope that the cases of other wives and relatives of exiled opponents and political prisoners who have been subjected to similar violations will also be addressed without further delay.”

Amnesty International also reiterated its call on the Tunisian authorities to free all prisoners of conscience and to lift other restrictions imposed on former prisoners and relatives of imprisoned and exiled opposition political activists.
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