

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 30/59/97

15 December 1997

Further information on EXTRA 128/97 (MDE 30/50/97, 30 September 1997) and follow-up (MDE 30/51/97, 2 October) - Prisoner of Conscience / Health Concern

TUNISIA Khémais Ksila, aged 41, human rights defender

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Khémais Ksila, Vice-President of the *Ligue Tunisienne des Droits de l'Homme*, Tunisian Human Rights League, began another hunger-strike on 11 December 1997, in protest at his continuing detention and at the poor conditions in which he is held in 9 Avril Prison in Tunis. He has now ended this hunger-strike.

Khémais Ksila was arrested on 29 September 1997 after he issued a public statement announcing he was starting a hunger-strike in protest at restrictions imposed on him by the Tunisian authorities and at the human rights situation in the country. He was brought before an examining magistrate on 1 October and charged with "undermining public order, spreading false information aiming to disturb public order and inciting people to break the law".

Some Urgent Action participants have received replies from the Tunisian authorities which allege that Khémais Ksila's public statement of 29 September 1997 advocated the use of violence against the government. However, in the charges brought against Khémais Ksila by the Tunisian authorities there is no mention of violence or incitement to violence. Amnesty International has confirmed that in his statement Khémais Ksila announced his intention to start a hunger-strike as a means of peaceful protest and called on the public to support him and his family in this protest.

Nothing contained in the official replies to UA participants changes Amnesty International's belief that Khémais Ksila is a prisoner of conscience, held for the peaceful expression of his beliefs as a human rights defender. The organization continues to call for his immediate and unconditional release.

The cell in which Khémais Ksila is held currently houses more than 50 other prisoners, even though it is designed for a maximum of 35. The cell is unhygienic and infested with insects. Khémais Ksila suffers from diabetes and kidney problems.

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.

**This is for the information of the UA Network. No new action is required at present from the network on behalf of Khémais Ksila. However, if you have received a reply from the Tunisian authorities, you may want to respond, using the details provided in this update to address any points raised by the authorities. All your responses should:**

- acknowledge the authorities' reply;
- reiterate that Khémais Ksila is a prisoner of conscience who has not used or advocated violence;
- continue to call for his immediate and unconditional release as a prisoner of conscience.

**SEND YOUR REPLIES TO:**

1) Minister of Justice

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

**Faxes: +216 1 568 106**

**Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Your Excellency**

2) Minister of the Interior

M. Mohamed Ben Rejeb  
Ministre de l'Intérieur  
Ministère de l'Intérieur  
Av. Habib Bourguiba  
Tunis, Tunisia

**Faxes: +216 1 340888**

**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

**Faxes: + 216 1 336 338**

and to diplomatic representatives of Tunisia accredited to your country.