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# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 66/94

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PLEASE NOTE: The enclosed item on Tunisia is for external response only.

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6 April 1994

**TUNISIA DENIES ACCESS TO AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL DELEGATE**

The Tunisian Government has denied an Amnesty International delegate access to the country to observe a political trial and investigate recent arrests of local human rights activists.

The delegate, a staff member of the organization's International Secretariat in London, was due to observe the trial of Hamma Hammami, member of the illegal Parti communiste des ouvriers tunisiens, PCOT, (Tunisian workers' communist party) in Sousse and Gabes on 6 and 7 April and seek information from government officials and others about recent arrests of human rights activists.

"We are very disturbed by this development", Amnesty International said. "It appears to be part of a wider pattern of action by the Tunisian authorities against those seeking to monitor human rights in the country and an ominous departure from the government's stated commitment to openness. We fear this may indicate a growing official intolerance of objective reporting."

Amnesty International said the Tunisian Government had indicated that it might be willing to receive other delegates sent by the organization. This suggests to Amnesty International that the government may be trying to personalize its unhappiness with Amnesty International's reporting of human rights violations. But, if so, this is something that the organization considers totally unacceptable.

"Our reporting is based on information from a wide range of sources and is carefully checked for accuracy and objectivity before we go public", Amnesty International said. "Moreover, we have regularly raised our concerns about the cases of arbitrary detention, torture, deaths in custody and other abuses directly with the Tunisian authorities."

Several international observers, including an Amnesty International delegate, visited Tunisia in March to attend the trial of Hamma Hammami -- only for it to be suddenly postponed. Nevertheless evidence emerged of serious breaches of pre-trial procedures and ill-treatment.

The Tunisian authorities have recently taken action against a number of foreign journalists and lawyers who were expelled or prevented from entering the country. They include journalists from the BBC and Le Monde and a lawyer representing Reporters Sans Frontières. Foreign newspapers including the French daily Le Monde and Libération and the Moroccan weekly Les Nouvelles du Nord, and French television program on the political situation in Tunisia were also banned in Tunisia in the last weeks.

Several government critics have been arrested in Tunisia since February, including Moncef Marzouki, the former President of the Tunisian Human Rights League, and Abderrahmane Hani, a human rights lawyer. They were the only two people who had announced their intention to stand in the Presidential elections in March 1994. They are charged with divulging false information aimed at disturbing public order in relation to interviews they gave to foreign media, and remain detained awaiting trial.

Over the last three years, the organization has continued to raise its concerns directly with the Tunisian Government, as well as putting its concerns about human rights violations in Tunisia on the public record. Last January Amnesty International published a report on Tunisia entitled Tunisia: Rhetoric versus reality: the failure of a human rights bureaucracy. Amnesty International has continued to hope that this dialogue will lead to the necessary steps being taken by the government to end human rights violations in Tunisia.

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6 April 1994

**CHINA: PROMINENT DISSIDENT DETAINED FOR THE SECOND TIME THIS YEAR**

Wei Jingsheng, one of China's most famous dissidents, was detained by police on 1 April. Police confirmed to his family on 5 April that he was "under investigation". His assistant Tong Yi, who has not been heard from since the morning of Monday 4 April, is also reported to be "under investigation" but this has not yet been confirmed.

Wei Jingsheng and Tong Yi were returning to Beijing after a four-week visit to Tianjin when they were stopped in the outskirts of Beijing by seven police cars. The police reportedly produced a warrant and took Wei Jingsheng away. Tong Yi was permitted to return to Beijing. No information is available about their whereabouts.

Wei Jingsheng was released on parole in September 1993 after fourteen and a half years in prison. His parole period expired on 29 March 1994, but he has an additional three years' deprivation of political rights to serve. On 4 April, a Foreign Ministry spokeswoman is reported to have said that "Wei Jingsheng violated relevant regulations when he was on parole and when he was being deprived of political rights".

Individuals deprived of political rights may not stand for election and are denied, amongst other things, the freedoms of speech and assembly association guaranteed in China's Constitution. The Chinese authorities have interpreted Wei Jingsheng's frequent meetings with the foreign press and diplomats as violations of his parole conditions.

Reports on Saturday 2 April stated that the Beijing Public Security department had decided to investigate suspected new criminal offenses by Wei Jingsheng. He was reported to have left police custody immediately after an interrogation. His family have not been allowed to see him since they received official confirmation of his detention.

Amnesty International has received reports that police officers went to Wei Jingsheng's office on 4 April and searched through his papers.

This is the second time that Wei Jingsheng has been detained this year; he was held for 30 hours after he was taken into police custody in Beijing on 4 March 1994. Official sources said, at the time, that he was being held for violating his parole conditions.

Two other dissidents, Zhou Guoqiang, a lawyer, and Yuan Hongbing, a law professor, are still in detention. Their arrests and that of law student, Wang Jiaqi, were officially confirmed on 4 March 1994. However, Wang Jiaqi reportedly escaped from his place of detention in Tangshan city in late March and, according to unofficial reports, the authorities are "investigating the escape".

Amnesty International urges the Chinese government to immediately and unconditionally release Wei Jingsheng who is a prisoner of conscience, and release Tong Yi if she is also in detention. Amnesty International also calls for the immediate and unconditional release of prisoners of conscience Zhou Guoqiang and Yuan Hongbing.

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