

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 28/05/97

10 April 1997

Further information (1) on EXTRA 45/97 (MDE 28/04/97, 27 March 1997) - "Disappearance" / Fear for safety / Legal concern and new concern: Death in custody

ALGERIA Rachid Medjahed (alias Khaled Abou Mouaâd), ex-member of a town council representing the now banned *Front Islamique du Salut (FIS)*, Islamic Salvation Front

The family of Rachid Medjahed was informed on 3 April 1997 that he had died in detention on 26 February 1997.

Rachid Medjahed was arrested during an "anti-terrorist" raid carried out by security forces in Algiers in which the ten or so other members of his group were killed. He appeared on Algerian television (ENTV) on 23 February 1997 and confessed to having planned and directed the killing of Abdelhaq Benhamouda, leader of the *Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens (UGTA)*, Algerian Workers' General Union, who was shot dead outside the UGTA's office in Algiers on 28 January 1997.

Rachid Medjahed's family had not been informed of his arrest and only learned about it when they saw him on television on 23 February when he appeared to be in a poor condition.

Rachid Medjahed's father was summoned by the gendarmerie to the regional health centre in Blida on 2 April - that is, more than a month after Rachid Medjahed had allegedly died, but only a few days after the international community had been informed that he had "disappeared". He went the following day and was sent to the Frantz Fanon Hospital in Blida where the body was kept. He was reportedly allowed to see his son's body after having produced the gendarmerie's summons. The body reportedly had bullet holes in the upper thighs, abdomen, back and neck. The hospital officials refused to hand him the body, but gave him Rachid Medjahed's death certificate which was signed 3 March 1997 and confirmed he had died of violence and that on examination the body had been found to have gunshot wounds.

To date the family of Rachid Medjahed has not been told the circumstances of his death in custody, and has been unable to recover the body for burial.

Amnesty International is concerned that Rachid Medjahed may have been extrajudicially executed in detention. It urges the Algerian authorities to carry out a thorough, independent and impartial investigation into the causes and circumstances of his death, to make public its findings, and to bring to justice those responsible.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send letters in French, Arabic, English or in your own language:

- expressing grave concern at the fact that Rachid Medjahed has died in detention and at the long delay in informing his relatives of his death;
- urging the Algerian authorities to carry out a thorough, independent and impartial investigation into the circumstances of his death, to make public its findings and to bring to justice those responsible;
- urging the authorities to ensure that no detainee may be tortured and/or summarily executed while in the custody of the police or security forces.

APPEALS TO:

President

M. Liamine ZEROUAL
Président de la République
Présidence de la République
El Mouradia
Alger, Algérie
Fax: + 213 2 60 96 18

Salutation: Monsieur le Président / Dear President

Minister of Justice

M. Mohamed ADAMI
Ministre de la Justice
Ministère de la Justice
8 Place Bir Hakem
El-Biar, Alger, Algérie
Fax: + 213 2 922 560 / 925 557 / 796 557 / 722 560
Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

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President
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and to diplomatic representatives of Algeria accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 8 May 1997.