

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Legal Concern/fear of torture

6 March 1992

TUNISIA:

Azzeddine Hadj Belgacem

Amnesty International is concerned that Azzeddine Hadj Belgacem is being held incommunicado in prolonged *garde à vue* detention and may be at risk of torture.

Azzeddine Hadj Belgacem, a 33-year-old accountant from Gabes, was arrested on 7 February 1992 and held in *garde à vue* detention. His family were allowed to leave clothes for him at Gabes police station, but have not been allowed to visit him nor have they been given any information on his legal status. He was, however, taken under police guard to his office for a work related interview with the representative of a foreign company he was working for. The representative stated that he seemed to have been "physically abused" and described his appearance as "gaunt, dirty and exhausted" .

Azzeddine Hadj Belgacem was previously arrested in June 1987 and was sentenced to two years', later extended to ten years', imprisonment for charges including membership of an unauthorised organization. He was released by Presidential Pardon on 28 December 1987 after President Ben Ali came to power. It is thought that his current detention is based on his earlier arrest as all available information suggests that he has not been participating in any political activity. Azzeddine Hadj Belgacem suffers from a detached retina dating from his time in prison in 1987. Recurrence of this problem may result in the loss of his eyesight.

Over the past 18 months hundreds of detainees in Tunisia have been tortured and ill-treated during illegally prolonged *garde à vue* detention.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters (in French or Arabic if possible):

- urging that Azzeddine Hadj Belgacem be allowed immediate access to his family and lawyers, and that he receive any necessary medical care;
- urging that Azzeddine Hadj Belgacem be immediately released unless charged with a recognizable criminal offence and brought to trial;
- expressing concern that Azzeddine Hadj Belgacem is being held in illegally prolonged *garde à vue* detention.

APPEALS TO:

1. Minister of the Interior:
M. Abdallah Kallel

Ministre de l'Interieur
Ministère de l'Interieur
Avenue Habib Bourguiba
Tunis, Tunisie
Telegrams: Ministre Interieur, Tunis, Tunisia
Telexes: 13662 sdap tn

Salutation: Excellence / Your Excellency

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2. Minister of Justice:
M. Abderrahim Zouari
Ministre de la Justice
Ministère de la Justice
Boulevard Bab Benat
Tunis, Tunisie
Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Tunis, Tunisia
Faxes: + 216 1 568 106

Salutation: Excellence / Your Excellency

3. Chief of Police
Gabes Central Police Station
Abul Ash-Shabbi Street
Gabes
Tunisia
Telegrams: Chief of Police, Gabes Central Police Station, Gabes, Tunisia

Salutation: Monsieur / Dear Sir

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

First Presidential Counsellor for Human Rights:
M. Sadok Chaabane
Conseiller Présidentiel chargé des Droits de l'Homme
Palais Présidentiel
Carthage/Tunis
Tunisie
Faxes: + 216 1 744721 or 742513

Human Rights Organization:
Ligue Tunisienne de la Défense des Droits de l'Homme
23 rue du Yemen
Tunis, Tunisia
Faxes: + 216 1 795 466

and to diplomatic representatives of Tunisia in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat or your section Office if sending appeals after 17 April 1992.