

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 30/14/99

20 May 1999

Further information on EXTRA 60/98 (MDE 30/22/98, 25 August 98) and follow-up (MDE 30/24/98, 8 September 98) - Health concern / Prisoners of conscience

TUNISIA Afef BEN ROUINA (f), student
 Imen DEROUICHE (f), student
 Hinda AAROUI (f), student

Afef Ben Rouina and Imen Derouiche have been on hunger strike since 15 May 1999. They are protesting for a number of reasons: their trial has been postponed for five weeks because the prison authorities did not take them to court; they are held in poor conditions; the prison authorities have refused to allow them the books they need for their studies; and they are detained as prisoners of conscience.

Afef Ben Rouina, a political science postgraduate student, Imen Derouiche, a fourth year economics student, and Hinda Aaroui were due in court for trial on 15 May with 14 others, but the prison authorities failed to bring them to the court. The president of the court and the prosecutor postponed the trial to 19 June.

Hinda Aaroui and Imen Derouiche have been detained since March 1998, and Afef Ben Rouina since April 1998, on charges of links with an unauthorized association, attending unauthorized meetings and illegal distribution of leaflets. The association in question is an unauthorized left-wing group which does not use or advocate violence, and which criticizes the repression and lack of public freedom in Tunisia. Fourteen male students are detained on the same charges. The others charged are human rights lawyer Radhia Nasraoui (female), who is on bail, and three men who are in hiding.

The trial has attracted a lot of attention in Tunisia and abroad. Some 20 foreign lawyers were present as observers when the women were due in court, and some 120 Tunisian lawyers were present as part of the defence team. It is not the first time that the Tunisian authorities have postponed trials when international observers have been present.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in French, Arabic, English or your own language:

- seeking assurances that Imen Derouiche and Afef Ben Rouina will be given medical care if necessary;
- urging that prisoners of conscience Afef Ben Rouina, Imen Derouiche and Hinda Aaroui be immediately and unconditionally released.

APPEALS TO:

If voice answers please say: "je voudrais envoyer un fax, s'il vous plaît"

Minister of Justice

M. Abdallah Kallel

Ministre de la Justice

Ministère de la Justice

31 Boulevard Bab Benat

1006 Tunis, Tunisie

Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Tunis, Tunisie

Faxes: + 216 1 568 106

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Your Excellency

Minister of the Interior

M. Ali Chaouch

Ministre de l'Intérieur

Ministère de l'Intérieur

Avenue Habib Bourguiba

1001 Tunis, Tunisie

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Telegrams: Ministre Interieur, Tunis, Tunisie
Faxes: + 216 1 340 888
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.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 1 July 1999.