

URGENT ACTION

TUNISIAN STUDENT ACTIVIST HELD INCOMMUNICADO

Male student activist Mohammed Soudani is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment in custody in Tunisia. He was arrested on 22 October after meeting with two French journalists. His family and lawyer have been unable to obtain any information about him. He is believed to be held at the State Security Department of the Ministry of Interior in the capital, Tunis, where torture is common.

Mohammed Soudani was last seen on 22 October in a hotel in Tunis, where he met with two French radio journalists who were covering the presidential and legislative elections that took place in Tunisia on 25 October. Amnesty International believes that they were interviewing Mohammed Soudani because he is an active member within the student movement, the General Union of Tunisian Students (UGET). That evening, Mohammed Soudani phoned his lawyers and friends and told them that there were a number of security officers outside the hotel, and that if they did not hear from him after 10pm it was likely that he had been arrested. A short time later, his mobile phone was switched off.

On 23 October, unable to find out any information on the whereabouts of his client, Mohammed Soudani's lawyer filed a complaint with the Public Prosecutor in Tunis about the enforced disappearance of Mohammed Soudani. Mohammed Soudani's family has not been informed of his arrest or whereabouts as required under Tunisian law and his father was unable to obtain any information on him from police in the city of Mehdia, 200km south of Tunis, where Mohammed Soudani lives.

Mohammed Soudani was expelled from university in 2007 because of his activities within the UGET. He told Amnesty International during a meeting in October 2009 that he was previously arrested on 29 June 2007 and detained for 12 days, during which he said he was tortured, and then sentenced to six month suspended prison sentence. He also said he was again detained for another six days in October 2008, stripped of his clothes and beaten. He has been prosecuted several times, and has served a two-month prison term. He believes that the charges brought against him are related to his activism for the UGET.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Arabic, French or English or your own language:

- urging the authorities to disclose Mohammed Soudani's whereabouts immediately, and give him access to a lawyer of his choice, his family and any medical attention he may require;
- urging them to ensure that he is not tortured or otherwise ill-treated;
- urging them to release Mohammed Soudani immediately and unconditionally, unless he is promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offence and brought to trial in proceedings that meet international standards for fair trial.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 15 DECEMBER 2009 TO:

Minister of Interior
Rafik Haj Kacem
Ministry of Interior
Avenue Habib Bourguiba
1000 Tunis
Tunisia
Fax: + 216 71 340 888
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice and Human Rights
Béchir Tekkari
Ministry of Justice and Human Rights
31 Boulevard Bab Benat
1006 Tunis - La Kasbah
Tunisia
Fax: + 216 71 568 106
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:
Ridha Khemakhem
General Coordinator for Human Rights
Ministry of Justice and Human Rights
31 Boulevard Bab Benat
1006 Tunis - La Kasbah
Tunisia

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives of Tunisia accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Amnesty International has received numerous reports of torture and other ill-treatment by the Tunisian security forces. In virtually all cases, allegations of torture are not investigated and the perpetrators are not brought to justice. Individuals are most at risk of torture when held incommunicado. The most commonly reported methods of torture are beatings on the body, especially the soles of the feet; suspension by the ankles or in contorted positions; electric shocks; and burning with cigarettes. There are also reports of mock executions, sexual abuse, including rape with bottles and sticks, and threats of sexual abuse of female relatives.

As a state party to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Tunisia is under an obligation to prevent torture and to "ensure that its competent authorities proceed to a prompt and impartial investigation, wherever there is reasonable ground to believe that an act of torture has been committed in any territory under its jurisdiction".

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