

PUBLIC

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22 July 1999

Further information on UA 71/99 (MDE 30/08/99, 9 April 1999) and follow-up (MDE 30/11/99, 22 April 1999) - Health concern / POCs

TUNISIA Qais Ouislati Ali Jallouli  
Lotfi Hammami Jalal Bouraoui  
Rachid Trabelsi Ridha Ouislati  
Najib Baccouchi Habib Hasni  
Noureddine Benticha Chedli Hammami  
Taha Sassi Haikal Mannai  
Bourham Gasmi

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On 14 July, the *Tribunal de première instance*, Court of First Instance, in Tunis, handed down prison sentences of ranging from three and a half to four years to Najib Baccouchi, Noureddine Benticha, Chedli Hammami, Taha Sassi, Ali Jallouli and Fahem Boukaddous.

Rachid Trabelsi, Ridha Ouislati, Habib Hasni, Qais Ouislati, Lotfi Hammami, Haikal Mannai, Jalal Bouraoui and Bourham Gasmi received lesser sentences of 17 to 17 and a half months' imprisonment. They should be released within weeks, as the length of their sentences nearly matches the time they have already spent in prison awaiting trial.

The 13 students were tried with seven co-defendants, including human rights lawyer Radhia Nasraoui, in a case that involved alleged members of the unauthorized *Parti communiste des ouvriers tunisiens* (PCOT), Tunisian Workers' Communist Party. The marathon trial, which opened on 10 July and lasted for 20 hours, ending at 5am the next day, was characterized by disrespect for the rights of the defence. At one point all the defence lawyers walked out in protest at the judge's decision to prevent one of them from continuing his argument to the court.

**No further appeals are required from the network, as the case has now been taken up by other means.**