

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Tunisia: New smear campaign inciting to hatred and violence against human rights defenders

Eleven human rights organizations express today their utmost concerns about the threats stemming from a smear campaign led by a Tunisian weekly newspaper against several human rights defenders who have been denouncing violations of fundamental freedoms in Tunisia.

In its edition of December 12, 2009, the *Koll Ennass* newspaper continues the smear campaign it has started over the past weeks against Tunisian defenders. The main target of such defamatory, slanderous and insulting statements published in the latest editions of the weekly newspaper are Mr. Kamel Jendoubi, President of the Committee for the Respect of Freedoms and Human Rights in Tunisia (Comité pour le respect des libertés et des droits de l'Homme en Tunisie, CRLDHT) and of EMHRN, and member of the Executive Committee of OMCT, Ms. Sihem Bensedrine, Spokesperson of the National Council for Liberties in Tunisia (Conseil national pour les libertés en Tunisie, CNLT), Ms. Sana Ben Achour, President of the Tunisian Association of Democrat Women (Association tunisienne des femmes démocrates, ATFD), and Mr. Khemais Chammari, former FIDH Vice-President and member of the Board of the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation to Support Human Rights Defenders (EMHRF). The latter are accused of links with Israeli and European intelligence services and of plotting against the Palestinian resistance and Arab States by revealing secret information about them to journalists. They are also called "mercenaries" and "corrupted".

In its latest issue, the newspaper also blames Mr. Michel Tubiana, Honorary President of the Human Rights League (Ligue des droits de l'Homme), member of the Executive Committee of EMHRN and former FIDH Vice-President.

Several articles in this edition are particularly virulent against Mr. Tubiana, described as a "Jewish lawyer who recruited Tunisians". He appears in a "photomontage" in front of the Mossad emblem. This edition of *Koll Ennass* also refers to a "gang of collaborationists and spies who are active in research departments and NGOs linked to the Israeli intelligence". The titles and subtitles of some of the articles - "How Israel has enlisted Benachour, Bagga, Bensedrine", "What is the truth of the Jewish lawyer and the reality of his gang of spies"- are also deliberately defamatory. The newspaper also implies that these revelations could trigger violent reactions in Beirut and in the Palestinian circles.

Our organizations firmly denounce these slanderous statements and are deeply worried that besides the desire to discredit some human rights defenders and all forms of opposition to the Tunisian regime, these completely fancy charges could pave the way for a justification in advance of announced acts of violence.

Our organizations also call for a reaction of the European Union on the basis of the Guidelines on human rights defenders.

Our organizations more generally denounce the context of widespread repression against human rights defenders, call for the end of any form of harassment against them, and for the immediate and unconditional release of the defenders detained.

Signatory Organizations

Al-Haq
Amnesty International
Cairo Institute for Human Rights
Centre libanais des droits de l'Homme
Committee for the Defense of Democratic Liberties and Human Rights in Syria (CDF)
Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies
Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'Homme et Organisation mondiale contre la torture,
dans le cadre de l'Observatoire pour la protection des défenseurs des droits de l'Homme
Ligue algérienne de défense des droits de l'Homme
Ligue française des droits de l'Homme
Réseau euro-méditerranéen des droits de l'Homme

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For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566 or email: press@amnesty.org

International Secretariat, Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW, UK
www.amnesty.org