

EXTERNAL

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MEDICAL CONCERN

**@Habib LASSOUED
TUNISIA**

AI is concerned at reports that Habib Lassoued, a 33-year-old Tunisian engineer, has been subjected to torture and ill-treatment and is being denied medical assistance. Habib Lassoued, an alleged supporter of the Islamic movement *al-Nahda* which is not recognized by the government, was arrested on 14 November 1990 and held at a police station in Tunis in *garde à vue* [incommunicado] detention for 26 days - 16 days beyond the 10-day maximum period allowed by Tunisian law. He was then brought before the examining magistrate on 9 December 1990, charged with offences including threatening state security and belonging to an unauthorized movement, and transferred from police custody to the 9 *Avril* prison in Tunis.

During incommunicado detention in police custody he was allegedly threatened with firearms, subjected to beatings, electric shocks, prolonged suspension by the limbs, having his own excrement forced into his mouth, and having pieces of wood forced into his anus. As a result of this treatment he is reported to suffer from injuries to the vertebral column and the legs, and to be in a generally poor physical condition. He is reportedly held in solitary confinement.

His lawyer requested the court to ensure that Mr Lassoued was given a medical examination and care but this request was denied.

AI is gravely concerned by these reports of torture. The organization is urging the Tunisian authorities to investigate them and is seeking information on the present state of health of Habib Lassoued. The organization has previously raised with the Tunisian Government its concern at reports of torture but to date these have not been answered. Amnesty International does not know of any investigation in the past year into numerous allegations of torture and ill-treatment of detainees during *garde à vue* detention.

Habib Lassoued has previously been held as a prisoner of conscience. He was one of the so-called "security group" arrested on 8 November 1987 and held without charge or trial until his release in the following year. The authorities accused him of plotting the overthrow of the previous government of President Bourghiba. Amnesty International believed that he was held solely for his political beliefs.

