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Further information on EXTRA 128/97 (MDE 30/51/97, 30/09/97) and follow-ups (MDE 30/51/97, 2 October 1997; MDE 30/59/97, 15 December 1997; MDE 30/02/98 21 January 98 and MDE 30/03/98, 12 February 1998) - Prisoner of Conscience / Health concern / Legal concern

TUNISIA Khemais Ksila

On 24 June 1998, Khemais Ksila began a hunger strike at the 9 April Civil Prison in Tunis, in protest against his three-year prison sentence, bad conditions of detention and the constant harassment of his family.

Khemais Ksila's contact with his family is subject to rigid restrictions -- letters are confiscated and family visits limited. He is detained in an overcrowded cell, the food brought to him by his family is always searched and sometimes confiscated. His wife and 14-year-old son, Mohamed, are under constant surveillance and are often harassed by the security forces.

On 28 May the Court of Cassation in Tunis upheld his three-year prison term, pronounced by the Appeal Court in Tunis on 25 April.

On 16 June, Khemais Ksila wrote to the Interior Minister protesting about his detention conditions. There has been no reply.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Khemais Ksila, who is married with three children, has been detained since 29 September 1997. He was arrested after issuing a public statement declaring that he was going on hunger strike in protest at the harassment he had been subjected to because of his human rights activities. He also condemned the deterioration of the human rights situation on Tunisia.

He was first sentenced on 11 February 1998, on charges of incitement to public disorder, spreading false information and inciting citizens to break the law. On 11 April, Khemais Ksila was brought before the Court of Appeal in Tunis. He was interrogated by the court and the defence lawyers pleaded for his release. However the judge postponed the case on the grounds that some documents were missing from the case file. On 25 April, the Appeal Court upheld Khemais Ksila's sentence in what Amnesty International considers to be a grossly unfair hearing. The composition of the Appeal Court had for instance changed since the first hearing on 11 April.

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

- expressing grave concern regarding Khemais Ksila's health and seeking assurances that he be given all necessary medical care;
- expressing concern that Khemais Ksila's three-year prison sentence has been upheld by the Tunis Court of Cassation;
- reiterating that he is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for peacefully expressing his opinions and carrying out human rights activities, and calling for his immediate and unconditional release.

APPEALS TO:

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 (If voice, please say: "Je voudrais envoyer un fax, s'il vous plaît.")

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

Telegrams: Ministre Interieur, Tunis, Tunisie

Faxes: + 216 1 354 331

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

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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 7 August 1998.