

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 30/24/96

27 August 1996

Further information (1) on UA 208/96 (MDE 30/23/96, 22 August 1996) - Fear of torture or ill-treatment / probable prisoners of conscience / fear of arrest as POC

TUNISIAMohamed Tahar BRAHMI (not correct spelling), student
Lotfi HAMMAMI, student
Bourhan GASMI, student
Tahar GARGOURA, student
Abdel Moumen BELANES, student

new names:Raja CHAMEKH (f), student
Mohamed DRIDI, student
Ali JALLOULI, student

Mohamed Tahar Brahmi, Lotfi Hammami, and Bourhan Gasmi, all arrested on 17 August 1996, were released on bail on 25 August 1996. Raja Chamekh, Ali Jallouli, arrested on 20 August in Tunis, and Mohamed Dridi, arrested on 20 August in el-Kef, were also released on bail on 25 August.

All of them were held incommunicado for the entire duration of their detention and were reportedly tortured and ill-treated by being suspended in the *poulet rôti* position ("chicken on the spit"): the victim's ankles and wrists are tied together, he or she is then suspended from a bar placed under the knees, and beaten on the soles of the feet and other parts of the body), having their heads plunged in water, being severely beaten, including on the head, and being subjected to sleep deprivation. Defence lawyers who saw the prisoners when they were brought to the examining magistrate just before their release confirmed that they bore bruises and marks of torture. Their defence lawyers requested a medical examination. All of them were taken to Charles Nicole Hospital in Tunis for medical examinations on 25 August. Their families were not informed of their arrest and were unable to obtain any information as to their whereabouts during their detention.

Charges against the students include belonging to an unauthorized group (believed to be a group close to the unauthorized *Parti communiste des ouvriers tunisiens* (PCOT), Tunisian Workers' Communist Party, distributing leaflets, and insulting official institutions.

Tahar Gargoura and Abdel Moumen Belanes, whose houses were searched by security forces in their absence during the nights of 17 and 18 August, remain in hiding and it is feared that they are also at risk of arrest.

Amnesty International is concerned at the allegations that the above students were subjected to torture and ill-treatment during their incommunicado detention, and calls on the Tunisian authorities to ensure that a full, independent and impartial investigation be carried out into the allegations, that the findings of the investigation be made public, and that anyone found responsible be brought to justice.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Torture and ill-treatment of detainees during incommunicado detention, often in the Ministry of the Interior itself, continues to be widespread in Tunisia. Amnesty International is concerned that, to date, no judicial inquiry has

been held into such cases and that none of those responsible for torture and ill-treatment of thousands of detainees are known to have been brought to justice. The organization is also concerned at the continued imprisonment of thousands of individuals as prisoners of conscience.

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

- expressing concern at the allegations that Mohamed Tahar Brahmi, Lotfi Hammami, Bourhan Gasmi, Raja Chamekh (female), Mohamed Dridi, and

Ali Jallouli were tortured and ill-treated during incommunicado detention, and urging that a full, independent and impartial investigation be carried out into the allegations, that the findings of the investigation be made public, and that anyone found responsible be brought to justice;

- reminding the Tunisian authorities of their obligation to investigate allegations of torture and ill-treatment in compliance with the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment, to which Tunisia is a state party;

- expressing concern that the above-named students are at risk of being imprisoned as prisoners of conscience and seeking assurances that, if they are brought to trial, their trial will be held in full accordance with internationally-recognized standards for fair trial;

- seeking assurances that Tahar Gargoura and Abdel Moumen Belanes will not be detained as prisoners of conscience.

APPEALS TO:

1) Minister of Justice

M. Sadok Chaâbane
Ministre de la Justice
Ministère de la Justice
Boulevard Bab Benat
Tunis, Tunisia

Fax: +216 1 568 106

Telex: 13000 maet tn (via Ministère de l'Intérieur)

Telegram: Ministre de la Justice Chaâbane, Tunis, Tunisie

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Your Excellency

2) Minister of the Interior

M. Mohamed Jegham
Ministre de l'Intérieur
Ministère de l'Intérieur
Av. Habib Bourguiba
Tunis, Tunisia

Fax: +216 1 340 888

Telex: 13662 sdap tn

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Tunisian Human Rights League

Me Taoufik Bouderbala, Président

Ligue Tunisienne des Droits de l'Homme, LTDH

21 Rue Imam el Bakri

1002 Tunis Belvedere, Tunisia

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 8 October 1996.