

Worldwide Appeals: October 1996

## TUNISIA

Khemais Chammari is a human rights activist and a member of parliament representing the opposition party, Movement of Democratic Socialists (MDS). In July 1996 he was sentenced to five years' imprisonment on charges of "disclosing national secrets to a foreign power", which he denies. AI considers him a prisoner of conscience.

Khemais Chammari was arrested on 18 May 1996. He was accused of disclosing information about the judicial investigation into the case of MDS President Mohamed Mouadda, prisoner of conscience, who was sentenced in February 1996 to 11 years' imprisonment on charges of having secret relations with a foreign power. Mohamed Mouadda was arrested in October 1995, after the MDS published an open letter to the President of Tunisia criticizing the absence of democracy and basic liberties in the country.

Before his arrest Khemais Chammari and his wife were subjected to police surveillance and harassment. After his arrest he was detained in harsh conditions in spite of his poor health. His conditions improved after he went on hunger-strike. At his trial, which was attended by observers from AI and other organizations, the prosecution produced information obtained by bugging the telephones and faxes of Khemais Chammari and others. However, no convincing evidence was produced to substantiate the charges against him.

Following the imprisonment of thousands of political opponents and government critics, human rights defenders have been the subject of increasing repression and intimidation in Tunisia.

+Please write, calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Khemais Chammari, to: President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali/ President of the Republic/ Palais Présidentiel/ Tunis/ Carthage/ Tunisia.

## VENEZUELA

Arnold Blanco, aged 15, and Carlos David Fuentes, aged 16, both suffered fractured ribs as a result of beatings they received while held in the Juvenile Division of the Technical Judicial Police in Coche, a police detention centre for minors in Caracas, the capital.

When an AI delegation visited the centre in July 1996, they found dozens of children as young as 12 years old enduring up to two months of cruel, inhuman and degrading conditions of detention, including lack of water, sanitation and adequate food, with no access to medical care and no recourse to legal defence. All the children were subjected daily to brutal beatings by the warders. "Many showed signs of recent torture such as bruises on several parts of the body and even fractured bones", a forensic expert who participated in the delegation said.

Arnold Blanco had been detained for 16 days at the time of the visit. He was arbitrarily arrested after his impoverished mother sought medical treatment for his mild psychiatric disturbances in an official institution. Carlos David Fuentes also needed urgent medical treatment. Both these children have now been released, but children as young as eight are known to have been held in the centre. Most had not committed any criminal offence.

A 13-year-old boy told AI: "I am detained here without charge. I should be released but my relatives cannot afford to come and fetch me. I am very hungry, and at night I am very cold. And they [the police] also beat us with truncheons."

Venezuela signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 and the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in 1991.

+Please write, calling for an independent inquiry into the torture of Arnold Blanco, Carlos David Fuentes and other children and for immediate measures to improve conditions in the Juvenile Division of the Technical Judicial Police in Coche, to: Dr Asdrúbal Aguiar/ Minister of Presidency/ Placio de Miraflores/ Caracas/ Venezuela.

## CHAD

Gédéon Largue Mbailassem, aged 25, was arrested by members of the Gendarmerie on 8 October 1995, on suspicion of being a member of an armed group, the Armed Forces for the Federal Republic (FARF). He was among at least 22 civilians arrested in the southern Chad provinces of Logone Occidental and Logone Oriental between July and October 1995. The detainees were accused of collaborating with the FARF and are believed to be held without charge or trial in Faya Largeau in northern Chad. AI believes they may be prisoners of conscience.

Gédéon Largue Mbailassem and the other prisoners appear to have been arrested simply because of where they live. The FARF has carried out sporadic attacks in the Logone provinces in the past two and a half years. The Chad authorities have responded by randomly targeting the civilian population in these provinces. Government troops have been responsible for human rights violations ranging from arbitrary arrest and detention to torture, rape and extrajudicial execution. In most cases the victims were singled out solely because they lived in areas of FARF activity.

Some of the detainees arrested with Gédéon Largue Mbailassem were held handcuffed and chained for over two months in harsh conditions at Moundou prison, before being transferred to N'Djaména, the capital. Since then Gédéon Largue Mbailassem's family have had no official confirmation of his whereabouts. At least three other detainees arrested at the same time were too ill to be transferred to N'Djaména. They were released without charge in October 1995.

Political prisoners previously detained in similar circumstances in Faya Largeau were made to carry out forced labour during their detention. AI fears that Gédéon Largue Mbailassem and his co-detainees may be held in harsh conditions.

+Please write, asking for Gédéon Largue Mbailassem to be safeguarded from ill-treatment and torture and to be released immediately and unconditionally if he is not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence, to: President Idriss Déby/ Président de la République/ Présidence de la République/ BP 74/ N'Djaména/ Chad.

## Update - Indonesia

Prisoner of conscience José Antonio Belo was freed in May 1996. The East Timorese student was sentenced in May 1995 to 18 months' imprisonment on charges of "expressing hostility to the government" after participating in a peaceful demonstration (see AI News July 1995). To AI's knowledge, his co-defendants remain in prison. The organization calls for their immediate and unconditional release.

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