

PUBLIC

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16 February 2007

UA 41/07 Fear of torture or other ill-treatment/fear for safety

LIBYA Idriss Boufayed (m), aged 49
Jum'a Boufayed (m)
al-Mahdi Saleh Hmeed (m)
Jamal al-Haji (m)
and several others

A number of men have been arrested for planning a peaceful demonstration, and are at risk of torture or other ill-treatment. One of them has had his father's house set on fire by young men allegedly working in collusion with the authorities.

Idriss Boufayed, who heads an organisation which regularly criticizes the government, was reportedly arrested at around 1am on 16 February by officers of the Internal Security Agency. His brother Jum'a was arrested a few hours later. Idriss Boufayed and several others had been planning a peaceful demonstration for 17 February to mark the anniversary of a police attack on a demonstration in the city of Benghazi, in which at least 12 people were shot dead and scores were injured.

Jum'a Boufayed described his brother's arrest in a telephone interview with the London-based *Libya al-Mostakbal* news website. He said that a group of armed men had called at the family home and broken down the door when nobody answered, and taken his brother away. He said that he had recognized the officer apparently in charge of the operation as the head of a local branch of the Internal Security Agency. Jum'a Boufayed said he did not know where they had taken his brother, and added that he feared he would be arrested too, because of the information he had revealed in the interview and other phone calls. He was reportedly arrested shortly afterwards.

Another man involved in the organization of the demonstration, al-Mahdi Saleh Hmeed, was reportedly arrested in the afternoon of 16 February. Earlier the same day, his father's house had reportedly been set on fire by a group of young men, allegedly colluding with the authorities, who reportedly also assaulted members of his family.

Idriss Boufayed and al-Mahdi Saleh Hmeed, along with two other men, Ahmed al-Abidi and Bashir Qasem al-Hares, had issued a communiqué to news websites announcing that they were planning a peaceful demonstration, to take place in the capital, Tripoli on 17 February, to commemorate the first anniversary of the killing of at least 12 people and the injuring of scores more when police opened fire on a demonstration in the city of Benghazi. The Libyan authorities said in 2006 that they had charged 10 senior officials in connection with the incident, but Amnesty International is not aware that any have yet been brought to trial.

Several others are feared to have been arrested in connection with the planned demonstration. They include writer Jamal al-Haji, who has not been seen by his family since the evening of 15 February. He had given a telephone interview that day to the *Libya al-Mostakbal* website, in which he criticised the Libyan authorities.

Idriss Boufayed is the secretary general of the National Union of Reform – Nur, which he co-founded in 2004. It has been critical of the political situation in Libya. He had been recognized as a refugee in Switzerland, but returned to Libya in September 2006, reportedly after receiving assurances from the Libyan embassy in Bern that he would not be at risk from the authorities; earlier that year the embassy had issued him with a passport. However, he was arrested on 5 November and detained incommunicado until 29 December, when he was released, apparently without charge. Throughout this time, the authorities reportedly did not tell his

family why he had been arrested or where he was held. Amnesty International wrote to the Libyan authorities in December to express concern that he might be a prisoner of conscience

On 15 January, Idriss Boufayed issued a public statement thanking all the national, regional and international organizations and individuals who had contributed to "his release from prison without restriction or condition" and pledging to continue the struggle for a "modern, democratic Libya".

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Arabic, English or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Idriss Boufayed, Juma Boufayed, al-Mahdi Saleh Hmeed, Jamal al-Haji and anyone else who has been arrested in connection with the demonstration in Tripoli planned for 17 February;
- urging the authorities to ensure that all of those who have been arrested are treated humanely, and protected from torture and other ill-treatment;
- calling on the authorities to tell the families of all the detainees where they are detained and on what grounds;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that they are granted any medical attention they may require;
- urging the authorities to release them immediately unless they are promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offence and tried within a reasonable time;
- expressing concern for the safety of the family of al-Mahdi Saleh Hmeed and urging the authorities to open an investigation into the attack in which their house was set on fire.

APPEALS TO:

Head of State

Colonel Mu'ammar AL-GADDAFI
Office of the Leader of the Revolution
Tripoli
Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Email: info@algathafi.org
Salutation: **Your Excellency**

Interior Minister

Brigadier Salih Rajab AL-MISMARI
Secretary of the General People's Committee for Public Security
Secretariat of the General People's Committee for Public Security
Tripoli
Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Email: minister@almiezan.net
Salutation: **Your Excellency**

COPIES TO:

The Gaddafi Development Foundation

Saif al-Islam al-Gaddafi
President
The Gaddafi Development Foundation
El Fatah Tower, 5th Floor B No. 57, PO Box 1101
Tripoli
Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Email: info@gaddaficharity.org

and to diplomatic representatives of Libya accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 30 March 2007.