

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 30/03/00

10 February 2000

Further information on UA 06/00 (MDE 30/01/00, 11 January 2000) - Human rights defenders/ fear for safety

TUNISIA Sihem Ben Sedrine (f), journalist
 Employees of *Editions Aloès*, publishing house

On 2 February, Sihem Ben Sedrine's car was forced to stop near her house by a man in another car who jumped out and threatened her with a razor. She managed to escape and get into her house, and her husband and a friend rushed outside and apprehended the man. As they did this, they were surrounded by members of the security forces. All were taken to the police station.

The police refused to record Sihem Ben Sedrine's complaint against the man, arguing that she had no witnesses, but did record her attacker's complaint, against Sihem Ben Sedrine, her husband Omar Mestiri and their friend, for apprehending him.

Sihem Ben Sedrine's colleagues at the publishing house *Editions Aloès* are facing further harassment. On 11 January managing editor Jean-François Poirier, a French national, was dismissed from his job teaching philosophy at Tunis University. He wrote to the director of the university to ask why he had been dismissed, but received no reply.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The security forces frequently use attacks and violent threats to intimidate human rights defenders and government critics. In May 1999, journalist Taoufik Ben Brik was attacked in broad daylight by three men armed with chains, who broke his arm. On 17 December 1999, a car driven by a plainclothes member of the security forces deliberately ran into the car of Khemais Ksila, vice-president of the *Ligue Tunisienne des droits de l'homme* (LTDH), Tunisian Human Rights League.

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

- calling for a prompt investigation into the 2 February attack on Sihem Ben Sedrine and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- urging the Tunisian authorities to take effective measures to ensure that human rights defenders are protected and allowed to carry out their human rights activities, and to exercise their right to freedom of expression and association, without interference, intimidation or persecution;
- calling on the Tunisian authorities to adhere to the numerous international human rights treaties ratified by Tunisia by taking prompt and concrete measures to ensure that the harassment, surveillance and intimidation of all human rights defenders, their relatives and colleagues is stopped.

APPEALS TO:

Président M. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali
Président de la République
Palais Présidentiel
Tunis/Carthage
Tunisie

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Telegrams: President, Tunis, Tunisia
Faxes: + 216 1 744 721
Salutation: Monsieur le Président / Dear President

M. Abdallah Kallel
Ministre de l'Intérieur
Ministère de l'Intérieur
Avenue Habib Bourguiba
1001 Tunis
Tunisie

Telegrams: Ministre Interieur, Tunis, Tunisia
Faxes: + 216 1 340 888
Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Tunisian Human Rights League
Me Toufik Bouderbala
Président Ligue Tunisienne des Droits de l'Homme
LTDH
7 Rue Pierre Curie
Tunis
Tunisia
Faxes: + 216 1 336 338

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 23 March 2000.