

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 30/001/2004

09 January 2004

Further Information on UA 190/03 (MDE 30/016/2003, 27 June 2003) and follow-up (MDE 30/017/2003, 4 July 2003) - Prisoner of conscience / Health concern

TUNISIA Zouheir Yahiaoui (m), aged 35

Following a relentless national and international campaign, prisoner of conscience Zouheir Yahiaoui was conditionally released from prison on 18 November 2003. Whilst campaigning for his release, Zouheir Yahiaoui had gone on several extended hunger strikes and was on the 17th day of a hunger strike when he received the news that he was to be set free.

Zouheir Yahiaoui said that while in prison he had been unaware that Amnesty International's members were campaigning on his behalf. It was only when he returned home, that he found out from his family and through the internet that he had received immense international support. He said, "I thank everybody for what they have done for me. I like what Amnesty International does. There are so many prisoners who suffer in Tunisian prisons. The work of Amnesty International's members is good and it is important."

Zouheir Yahiaoui had a number of medical problems while he was imprisoned. Some of these, such as an infectious skin disease, have meanwhile been cured, while others persist. Three of his teeth were pulled out in prison after they became infected. Zouheir Yahiaoui is still weakened as a consequence of the hunger strikes he undertook.

He told Amnesty International that, for a few days after his release, two men whom he presumed to be policemen were posted outside his home, but soon disappeared. He is subjected to the same routine surveillance as other former prisoners of conscience, but has so far not encountered any particular harassment or intimidation.

However, Zouheir Yahiaoui fears that he may be targeted again if he openly criticises the Tunisian authorities. Upon his release he had to sign a document stating that his release was conditional, but no further information was provided as to what the conditions entailed. Amnesty International is concerned that the fact that Zouheir Yahiaoui was released conditionally may be used to silence him and to discourage him from exercising his right to freedom of expression.

Many thanks to all those who sent appeals. If possible, please send a final round of appeals as quickly as possible, in Arabic, French or your own language:

- welcoming Zouheir Yahiaoui's release on 18 November 2003, but expressing concern that he was not released unconditionally;
- asking that any conditions imposed on him in connection to his release should be lifted and that he should not be prevented from exercising his right to freedom of expression;
- reiterating that the allegations of torture by Zouheir Yahiaoui need to be investigated.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic
Président M. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali
Président de la République
Palais Présidentiel
Tunis – Tunisie

Telegram: Président de la République, Tunis, Tunisie
Fax: + 216 71 744 721
Salutation: Excellence/ Your Excellency

Minister of the Interior

M. Hédi Mhenni
Ministre de l'Intérieur
Ministère de l'Intérieur
Avenue Habib Bourguiba
1000 Tunis – Tunisie

Telegram: Ministre de l'Intérieur, Tunis, Tunisie
Fax: +216 71 340 888/ 340 880
E-mail: mint@ministeres.tn
Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/ Your Excellency

Minister of Justice and Human Rights

M. Bechir Tekkari
Ministre de la Justice et de Droits de l'Homme
Ministère de la Justice et de Droits de l'Homme
31 Av. Bab Benat
1006 Tunis - La Kasbah – Tunisie

Telegram: Ministre de la Justice, Tunis, Tunisie
Fax: + 216 71 568 106
E-mail: mju@ministeres.tn
Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/ Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Official human rights body, reporting to the President:
Comité supérieur des droits de l'homme et des libertés fondamentales
Zakaria Ben Mustapha (Président)
85 avenue de la Liberté
1002 Tunis-Belvédère
Tunisie

Fax: + 216 71 796 593 / 784038

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 20 February 2004.