

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 30/004/2009

19 May 2009

UA 130/09 Fear of torture or ill-treatment

TUNISIA Ramzi Ben Jilani Romdhani (m), aged 32

In April 2009, Ramzi Romdhani is reported to have been tortured and otherwise ill-treated by prison officers in Mornaguia Prison, where he is serving a sentence of 29 years' imprisonment imposed under the 2003 anti-terrorism law.

When his brother visited him on 23 April, Ramzi Romdhani complained that prison officers had beaten him with sticks, kicked him while wearing military boots, inflicted cigarette burns on his body, and plunged his head repeatedly into a bucket of water causing him to fear drowning and eventually to lose consciousness. After this, he said he was taken to the prison infirmary and put on a respirator for two days and received medical treatment for his injuries. His brother observed that he had bruises on his body and that he appeared to have had some of his teeth knocked out.

It appears that Ramzi Romdhani was assaulted because he had protested against a decision by the prison authorities not to allow him a visit from his two-year-old daughter, although Tunisia's law on prison states that children under 13 years of age may be permitted to visit imprisoned parents outside normal visiting hours. Such visits, the regulations state, may be carried out without the use of glass screens or other barriers and in the presence of a prison guard in civilian clothes. Ramzi Romdhani's daughter was born after his arrest and, to date, he has never been allowed to see her.

No member of Ramzi Romdhani's family has been permitted to visit him since 23 April, possibly because of his allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, and this is raising concern that he may be at risk of further torture or other abuse.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Untried detainees held on terrorism-related charges and prisoners serving sentences imposed for political or security reasons, who number several hundred, are subject to ill-treatment and other abuse in Tunisian prisons.

Amnesty International delegates who visited Tunisia in November and December 2007 met some 20 families of prisoners sentenced on or facing terrorism-related charges, who complained that their relatives had been subjected to torture or other ill-treatment. In addition, former detainees, lawyers and relatives of prisoners report that such prisoners are regularly denied adequate medical care and many are said to be in poor health due to their harsh, unhygienic and inadequate prison conditions.

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

- Expressing concern over reports that Ramzi Romdhani was tortured and otherwise ill-treated by prison guards at Mornaguia Prison and calling for an urgent independent investigation and for any officials found responsible to be brought to justice;
- Expressing concern that Ramzi Romdhani has been denied family visits since 23 April, asking the reasons for this and urging both that he be treated humanely and be permitted to receive further, regular family visits without delay.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Justice and Human Rights
Béchir Tekkari
Ministère de la Justice et des Droits de l'Homme
31 Boulevard Bab Benat
1006 Tunis - La Kasbah
Tunisia
Fax: + 216 568 106
Salutation: Your Excellency

Directeur de l'Administration Pénitentiaire
Administration Pénitentiaire (Idarat el-Sujun)
Rue d'Iran Lafayette
1002 Tunis
Tunisie
Salutation: Dear Director

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 30 June.