



Middle East Studies Association of North America, Inc.
University of Arizona
1232 North Cherry Avenue
Tucson, Arizona 85721

August 25, 1993

President Zine Abidine Ben Ali
President of the Republic
Presidential Palace
Tunis/Carthage
Tunisia

Dear President Ben Ali:

The Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association is concerned at reports of the prolonged incommunicado detention of Tawfik Rajhi. The Middle East Studies Association comprises 2300 academics worldwide who teach and conduct research on the Middle East and North Africa. The association publishes the respected *International Journal of Middle East Studies* and is committed to ensuring respect for the principles of academic freedom and human rights throughout the region.

According to information received by MESA, Tawfik Rajhi, an economics professor at the Sorbonne, was arrested by authorities when he went to Tunisia for a visit on July 22, 1993. Professor Rajhi, as we understand it, has lived in France for the past 10 years and was initially questioned by police about an illegal real estate transaction. The police then admitted they had mistaken his identity and released him. On July 26, however, they returned to his family home and requested him to accompany them to rectify official records. Professor Rajhi has not been released in the interim, despite formal inquiries by his family and despite provisions of Tunisian law that set a maximum 10-day period for garde-à-vue detention.

Professor Rajhi is not known to have any political affiliation, but members of his family have been associated with the Ennadha movement. The fact that a brother was also detained for a few days in late July suggests that Professor Rajhi may be detained for political motives. The Committee on Academic Freedom is concerned that Professor Rajhi is being held in prolonged incommunicado detention (garde-à-vue), in contravention of Tunisian law and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Tunisia is a state party.

We would appreciate clarification as to the whereabouts of Professor Rajhi and his legal status, and urge you to investigate the reasons for his prolonged incommunicado detention. Moreover, we urge you to grant Professor Rajhi immediate access to his family, lawyer, and medical care if necessary.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Anne H. Betteridge
Executive Director

cc: M. Abdullah Kallel, Minister of the Interior
M. Sadok Chaabane, Minister of Justice
M. Habib Ben Yahia, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ambassador Ismail Khelil