



**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**

### **Radhia Nasraoui, Tunisia, 2000, Human Rights Defender**

*Radhia Nasraoui is a Tunisian human rights defender and lawyer. As co-founder and president of the Association for the Fight against Torture in Tunisia (ALTT), she has endured years of harassment for her work defending human rights in Tunisia. Radhia praises Amnesty International's effectiveness in improving the situation for victims of human rights abuses.*

Radhia Nasraoui has been in contact with Amnesty International since the 1970s. Here she describes in her own words her struggle to defend human rights in Tunisia and Amnesty International's role in supporting her.

“When I first got in contact with Amnesty I was a young lawyer at the beginning of my career. It was 1978, the time of the riots and the suppression of the trade unionists of the Union Générale des Travailleurs de Tunisie, the Tunisian Workers' General Union. I discovered the seriousness with which Amnesty International representatives treated the cases they were working on, their quest for truth, their discretion. I was struck by their independence towards everyone.

“While working on the cases of my clients, who were of various political convictions and backgrounds, I understood just how efficient Amnesty International's work was. For instance, a client who had 'disappeared' was brought before the examining magistrate after an Urgent Action was issued on his behalf, and a client who was beaten and ill-treated in prison was given less harsh detention conditions. And when a client finds out that people who he doesn't know, in a country far away, are demanding his release or asking about his health, all these actions play a large part in easing the detainee's isolation. It gives him hope and helps him to bear his possibly inhuman detention conditions.

“It is very important that Amnesty International does not take into account the social background, ideology or political stand of the victim. Amnesty International's actions prove that 'human rights for all' is not an empty slogan. The hundreds of postcards that my husband and I received are the living proof of this effective solidarity from Amnesty International members who are aware of our difficult situation. Through this story, I want to warmly thank all Amnesty International members. The pursuit of Amnesty International action is vital so that one day, all human rights abuses will end.

“When my husband, [spokesperson of the unauthorized Tunisian Workers' Communist Party (Parti communiste des ouvriers tunisiens) spokesperson of the unauthorized Tunisian Workers' Communist Party (Parti communiste des ouvriers tunisiens) Hamma Hammami, was arrested, tortured and sentenced to jail in 1994, I myself experienced the effectiveness of Amnesty International's actions. Amnesty International and other non-governmental organizations played a very important role in the improvement of his harsh detention conditions (months of isolation, physical and psychological aggression) and in his release. I will always remember the moral support Amnesty International gave me, particularly some calls from Amnesty International friends in difficult moments.

“In the end I too became the victim of constant harassment. My conviction of Amnesty International's role has been confirmed. Through my own experience, I have come to understand that Amnesty International's intervention on behalf of a victim reminds the authorities that this

person is not 'forgotten', that hundreds or even thousands of people worldwide are concerned about the fate of this person.

"Amnesty does not forget the people and the cases that it works with. For example, in my own case, Amnesty International has worked with me for over 30 years. Every time there was a violation, it supported me in different ways: by writing to the authorities, or through letters sent to me by its members, and the hundreds of postcards that I received and the conferences that I'm invited to participate in with the different sections of Amnesty. All of it has helped me to continue the fight for the respect of human rights and freedoms. I appreciate it all and I highly respect Amnesty and its work."

The text is based on a series of interviews given by Radhia Nasraoui between 1998 and 2010. Radhia remains in close contact with Amnesty International and talks about her recent human rights work in the June/July 2009 issue of Wire, Amnesty International's magazine for International members.

Contents selected from Alfresco:

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