



INTERPOL agrees to remove Algerian wanted person alert against French national, given real risks of torture

Fair Trials and REDRESS welcome this decision ahead of a critical UN Committee Against Torture expert briefing on INTERPOL and human rights compliance today

7 December 2015 – REDRESS and Fair Trials welcome a recent decision by INTERPOL (the International Criminal Police Organization) to delete from its files an international wanted persons alert ('Red Notice') against Mr Djamel Ktiti, a French national, due to human rights concerns.

The decision was made in response to a submission to INTERPOL by REDRESS and Fair Trials on behalf of Mr Ktiti in January 2015. Mr Ktiti had been the subject of a Red Notice at the request of Algerian authorities in 2009, which accused Mr Ktiti of being part of a drug trafficking ring. As a result, all of INTERPOL's 190 Member Countries received a request to assist in the arrest and extradition to Algeria of Mr Ktiti.

Mr Ktiti was arrested twice on the basis of INTERPOL's Red Notice: first in Morocco, where he was detained for more than two years, from 2009 to 2011, and then in Spain, where he was imprisoned for nearly six months in 2013 after visiting on holidays. On both instances, Morocco and Spain refused to extradite Mr Ktiti to Algeria, to avoid being in violation of the UN Convention Against Torture.

The UN Committee Against Torture decided in 2011 that Mr Ktiti's extradition to Algeria would violate the UN Convention Against Torture as it ran an unacceptable risk of being based on evidence obtained by torture and as Mr Ktiti faced an unacceptable high risk of torture if returned to Algeria. The Committee noted that the family of the suspect who implicated Mr Ktiti as an accomplice to drug trafficking, claimed that he had been savagely tortured to force him to confess and name his accomplices, including by being electrocuted, beaten, sodomized with a bottle and forced to swallow water in an attempt to drown him.

In their submission to INTERPOL, REDRESS and Fair Trials argued that the Red Notice in this case could therefore not serve its purpose as a tool for international cooperation as the UN Committee Against Torture's decision confirmed that it could not be used lawfully by INTERPOL's member countries. INTERPOL agreed with the organisations and INTERPOL's member countries must therefore delete the Red Notice from their systems forthwith.

The decision in Mr Ktiti's case coincides with an expert meeting facilitated by REDRESS and Fair Trials on INTERPOL and the UN Committee Against Torture, the UN body that monitors implementation of the UN Convention Against Torture, in Geneva, Switzerland, today. The meeting will discuss reform initiatives already underway within INTERPOL, which seek to address concerns that its wanted person alert system has been abused by certain states as

an means of pursuing opponents and have also violated human rights, including the absolute prohibition against torture, as illustrated by Mr Ktiti's case.

“INTERPOL is a valuable tool in the fight against serious crime, but this case illustrates yet again the massive human impact of being put on its global wanted person system. We are pleased that Mr Ktiti's Red Notice has been deleted and hope this case prompts INTERPOL to put in place proper safeguards to ensure it is meeting its obligations to respect basic human rights,” said Jago Russell, Chief Executive of Fair Trials

“I spent more than three years in detention in fear that I could be extradited at any time to a country where I ran a very real risk of being tortured. Today I feel relieved that INTERPOL has stated very clearly that it will not support Algeria's request for my arrest and that I can travel without having to fear arrest, detention and extradition every time I cross a border,” said Mr Ktiti.

“The decision of the UN Committee Against Torture underlines not only that the Red Notice against Mr Ktiti should never have been issued, but that it should have been deleted immediately after the Committee's decision in 2011. Instead, it remained in place and resulted in Mr Ktiti's second arrest and detention, and prevented him from travelling for as long as it existed. We hope that this case will help to put in place a system to prevent similar cases from happening in the future,” said Carla Ferstman, Director of REDRESS.

For further information please contact Juergen Schurr, REDRESS' Head of Law and Policy (English/French) on +44 (0) 20 7793 1777 or juergen@redress.org or Alex Mik at Fair Trials on +44 (0)7950 849 851 or alex.mik@fairtrials.net

Notes for editors

1. The closed REDRESS/Fair Trials Expert Meeting on Fostering Connections between INTERPOL and the UN Committee Against Torture will take place on Monday 7 December 2015 in Geneva from 15:00 to 5:00 pm, during the 56th session of the Committee.
2. Since 2013, Fair Trials has led a campaign calling for simple changes to make INTERPOL a more effective crime-fighting tool, including changes to the way INTERPOL processes its data before it is sent out to police forces across the globe, to ensure compliance with human rights standards. For more information, read Fair Trials' report 'Strengthening respect for human rights, strengthening INTERPOL', here: <https://www.fairtrials.org/wp-content/uploads/Strengthening-respect-for-human-rights-strengthening-INTERPOL4.pdf>.
3. Red notices are international wanted person alerts that enable one INTERPOL's member state to locate a wanted person in order to have that person extradited from the country in which the person is encountered. It originates at the request of the interested member state. As it has become easier for countries to obtain INTERPOL alerts, they have at times been used by certain states as a means of suppressing dissent. Fair Trials has worked with human rights and political activists who have been unable to travel due to the Red Notices against them. Concerns have also arisen regarding the use of INTERPOL alerts in cases involving use or risk of torture. The use of Red Notices has risen sharply during the last decade, increasing from 3,126 in 2008 to 10,718 in 2014.

About the organisations

Fair Trials is a human rights organisation that works to improve respect for the fundamental human right to a fair trial. It works for fair trials according to internationally-recognised standards of justice.

REDRESS fights for the rights of torture survivors and their families around the world. It takes legal challenges on behalf of survivors, works to ensure that torturers are punished and that survivors and their families obtain remedies for their suffering.