

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Health Concern/Legal Concern

11 November 1991

SYRIA:

Yusuf al-Burji

and 16 others, including Hakem al-Faiz

Yusuf al-Burji, a prisoner of conscience, is reported to be in a critical state of health. He has been suffering from a tumorous growth of his pituitary gland and periodic loss of consciousness. He is also suffering from a vertebral disorder. His left leg is said to be atrophied. About two years ago he was admitted to Tishrin Hospital in Damascus for diagnosis. Doctors apparently told him that he needed surgery. As far as Amnesty International is aware he has not received adequate treatment for any of these health problems.

A 53 year-old Palestinian of Jordanian nationality, Yusuf al-Burji is one of a group of people arrested in 1970 and 1971 following the November 1970 coup which brought President Hafez al-Assad to power. All served in or were connected with the former government and were arrested for refusing to cooperate with the new government. Seventeen of them remain in detention without charge or trial in al-Mezze Prison in Damascus.

Some of them were allegedly tortured after arrest, and they are all said to be in poor health. One of them, Hakem al-Faiz, a Jordanian aged 61, was transferred from prison in August 1991 and put under surveillance in a house in Damascus. His family was allowed to stay with him. This move had raised the family's expectation that his release was imminent. However, on 29 October 1991 he was returned to al-Mezze Prison and is reportedly suffering from depression.

All 17 are adopted by Amnesty International as prisoners of conscience.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/airmail letters:

- expressing concern at reports that Yusuf al-Burji is critically ill and that he has not been adequately treated despite having been examined by doctors two years ago, when he was apparently told that he needed surgery;

- seeking assurances that all the 16 detainees arrested with Yusuf al-Burji in 1970 and 1971 are being given proper medical attention, particularly Hakem al-Faiz who is reported to be suffering from depression and is in poor health after having been returned to al-Mezze Prison;

- expressing concern at their detention without trial for the past 20 years and calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all 17 detainees as prisoners of conscience.

PLEASE ORGANIZE APPEALS FROM MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS AND LEGAL PROFESSIONALS

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency **Your Excellency**
President Hafez al-Assad
Presidential Palace
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: President al-Assad, Damascus, Syria
Telexes: 419160 munjed sy

His Excellency Muhammad Harba **Your Excellency**
Minister of the Interior
Ministry of the Interior
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: Interior Minister, Damascus, Syria

His Excellency Khaled al-Ansari **Your Excellency**
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Nasr Street
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: Justice Minister, Damascus, Syria

His Excellency Dr. Iyad al-Shatti **Your Excellency**
Minister of Health
Ministry of Health
al-Majlis al-Niyabi Street
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: Health Minister, Damascus, Syria
Telexes: HEALTH 412655 SY

COPIES TO

Dr. M. Cherif Bakle
Ordre des Medecins Syriens
Place de l'Etoile
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

Maître
President of the Syrian Bar Association
rue Mayssaloun

Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

and to diplomatic representatives of Syria in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 23 December 1991.