

PUBLIC

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Fear for

SYRIA Hilal Abdel-Razaq Ali, British citizen

The Syrian authorities are reportedly holding British citizen Hilal Abdel-Razaq Ali without charge or trial, in an attempt to force a relative who is apparently wanted for committing a "breach of national security" to give himself up. The authorities deny having him in custody, and he is at risk of torture.

The British Embassy in Syria and the UK Foreign Office have made a number of enquiries, but the Syrian authorities have consistently denied they are holding him. They are reportedly holding other relatives of Hilal Abdel-Razaq Ali, for the same purpose.

Hilal Abdel-Razaq Ali, who is of Iraqi origin, had lived in the United Kingdom for 10 years, moved to Syria to work as a basketball instructor in July 2000. It appears that he was arrested in the northern city of Hama on 25 July. He was apparently beaten twice daily from then until October, when he was transferred to the *Far' Falastin* (Palestine Branch) military intelligence detention centre in Damascus, where he is now believed to be held incommunicado.

Hilal Abdel-Razaq Ali has high blood pressure and asthma. Before he left the UK he was undergoing tests to determine whether he was suffering from angina. His life will be in danger if he is not given adequate medication.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Torture is systematic in Syrian prisons and is frequently used in interrogation of political suspects or to extract information about missing suspects to whom the victim is connected.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English, Arabic or your own language:

- asking where Hilal Abdel-Razaq Ali is being held and urging that he is treated humanely and allowed access to medical care, consular visits and a lawyer of his choice;
- asking the authorities why he was arrested and whether he has been charged or tried;
- urging them to release him unless he is to be charged with a recognisably criminal offence;
- expressing concern at reports that he has been tortured and ill-treated, and calling for an independent and impartial investigation into these allegations.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency
President Bashar al-Assad
Presidential Palace
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: President al-Assad, Damascus, Syria
Telex: 419160 prespl sy
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

2

His Excellency
Dr Muhammad Harba
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His Excellency
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and to diplomatic representatives of Syria accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 2 July 2001.