

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 24/11/92
Distrib: PG/SC

To: Medical professionals
From: Medical Office / Research Department - Middle East
Date: 12 May 1992

@MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION

**Dr Nour al-Din al-Atassi and 15 others
£SYRIA**

Keywords

Theme: ill-health/POC

Profession/association: doctor/former head of state

Summary

Dr Nour al-Din al-Atassi, aged 63, is a former Syrian president and prime minister who has been held without charge or trial along with 15 others for nearly 22 years. He suffered a heart attack in late April 1992 and, although currently he is in a stable condition, intestinal polyps have apparently been discovered and surgery recommended. AI continues to be concerned about his health and is urging the Syrian authorities to release Dr al-Atassi unconditionally.

Recommended Actions

Letters from medical professionals, preferably written in Arabic, French or English otherwise your own language, should be sent to the addresses below:

- expressing concern at the heart attack suffered by Dr Nour al-Din al-Atassi
- noting reports that he has now been found to have intestinal polyps for which surgery has been recommended
- regretting that he has been held without charge or trial for nearly 22 years
- urging that he be released immediately to his family's care and be permitted to receive all necessary medical care
- urging that the other 15 held with Dr Nour al-Din al-Atassi be released and be given any necessary medical care.

Addresses

His Excellency
President Hafez al-Assad

of the Interior
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

His Excellency Khalid al-Ansari
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Nasr Street
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

His Excellency Dr. Iyad al-Shatti
Minister of Health
Ministry of Health
al-Majlis al-Niyabi Street
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

His Excellency Faruq al-Shar'a
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Al-Rashid Street
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

His Excellency Muhammad Harba
Minister of the Interior
Presidential Palace

Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

Ministry

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 24/11/92
Distrib: PG/SC

Date: 12 May 1992

MEDICAL CONCERN

**Dr Nour al-Din al-Atassi and 15 others
SYRIA**

Amnesty International is concerned about a Syrian prisoner of conscience who has been held without charge or trial for nearly 22 years and who recently suffered a heart attack. The organization is seeking his release and assurances that he will receive necessary medical care.

Dr Nour al-Din al-Atassi, aged 63, studied medicine at the University of Damascus and practised as a physician in Homs prior to his first ministerial appointment in August 1963 as Minister of the Interior. In 1966 he became President of the Republic and Secretary-General of the Syrian Ba'th Party, and in 1968 was also appointed Prime Minister. He held these posts until his arrest in November 1970 and subsequently has been held without charge or trial in al-Mezze Military Prison, Damascus.

Dr Nour al-Din al-Atassi was 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. Sixteen of them, including Dr Nour al-Din al-Atassi, remain in detention without charge or trial in al-Mezze Military Prison.

Some of them were allegedly tortured after arrest, and they are all said to be in poor health as a result of prolonged detention and inadequate medical facilities. All 16 are adopted by Amnesty International as prisoners of conscience. Over the years the organization has repeatedly expressed concern over their health and appealed for their immediate and unconditional release.

Dr Nour al-Din al-Atassi, is reported to be in a critical condition after suffering a heart attack on 26 or 27 April. He is known to be diabetic and suffers from hypertension. He is said to have been admitted to Tishrin Hospital in Damascus for treatment where he remains, apparently in a stable condition following medical treatment. While undergoing investigations during his stay in hospital he was apparently found to have intestinal polyps for which surgery was recommended. Due to his present state of health, any surgery must be delayed. Amnesty International is urging that he be released immediately and unconditionally and guaranteed access to whatever treatment he requires.