

SYRIANawras Husain al-Ramadan (m), teacher, aged 58

Nawras Husain al-Ramadan was apprehended by the Syrian security forces on 13 February on his arrival at Damascus Airport from the United Arab Emirates where he worked as a teacher. He has not been seen or heard of since. He may be in incommunicado detention at a centre run by the Syrian intelligence, where torture and ill-treatment are routinely inflicted on detainees.

In exile since 1980, following violent confrontations between the Syrian authorities and armed factions of the unauthorized Muslim Brotherhood Organization, Nawras Husain al-Ramadan reportedly decided to return to Syria having being provided with clearance by the Syrian authorities. He had reportedly not been a politically active opponent of the Syrian government in recent years, and members of his family had regularly visited Syria without fear of arrest or detention.

Several people have been detained in recent months following their voluntary return to Syria after years in exile. They include Muhammad Hasan Nassar who died in custody on 23 March after being held for a week in incommunicado detention by the Syrian authorities. He had returned to Syria after a long exile in Jordan. He was apparently suffering from Alzheimer disease and was taken to Syria by his family after informing the Syrian authorities of his decision to return home. Like Nawras Husain al-Ramadan, Muhammad Hasan Nassar reportedly fled Syria following the events of 1980.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In July 1980, the government passed Law 49 making membership of the Muslim Brotherhood a crime punishable by the death penalty. The law was passed in the wake of violent clashes between the security forces and armed factions of the Muslim Brotherhood. These had begun in the late 1970's and intensified during the first months of 1980. The clashes resulted in many civilian deaths and a number of government officials were assassinated by armed factions of the Muslim Brotherhood. In June 1980, between 600 and 1,200 suspected Muslim Brotherhood supporters who had been arrested, were reportedly extra-judicially executed in Tadmur Military Prison, where they had been held. The crackdown by the security forces continued into 1982 and culminated in the Hama massacre in February that year. Several thousand suspected members, supporters, or relatives of the Muslim Brotherhood were detained and hundreds "disappeared" following these events.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, Arabic, French or your own language:

- expressing concern about the safety of Nawras Husain al-Ramadan and urging the authorities to disclose his whereabouts;
- seeking assurances that Nawras Husain al-Ramadan is being well treated and not subjected to torture and ill-treatment;
- calling for the release of Nawras Husain al-Ramadan if he is indeed detained and not charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- urging that Nawras Husain al-Ramadan be allowed access to his family and a lawyer of his choice and to any medical care that he may require;
- expressing grave concern at the death in custody of Muhammad Hasan Nassar and calling for an independent investigation into the circumstances leading to his detention and death.

APPEALS TO:

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

His Excellency
Nabil al-Khatib
Ministry of Justice
Al-Nasr Street
Damascus
Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: Justice Minister, Damascus, Syria
e-mail: moj@net.sy
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency
Maj-Gen Ali Hammud
Minister of the Interior
Ministry of the Interior
Merjeh Circle
Damascus
Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: Interior Minister, Damascus, Syria
Telexes: 411016 AFIRS SY
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES 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 4 June 2002.