

PUBLIC

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UA 238/98 Medical Concern /Prisoner of Conscience

10 September 1998

**SYRIAN**Nizar Nayyuf, 38, sociologist and journalist

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There is serious concern for prisoner of conscience and human rights defender, Nizar Nayyuf, detained since 1992 in appalling conditions, who is being denied urgent and specialist medical care following a diagnosis of Hodgkin's disease (cancer).

None of the specialist treatments required by Nizar Nayyuf, such as radio-therapy and chemo-therapy, are available at the military hospital where he was diagnosed. Prisoners held at military prisons are not allowed treatment in civil hospitals.

In addition, Nizar Nayyuf is reportedly suffering from a number of other serious and painful medical complaints. These include ruptured disks, apparently caused by torture on the "German Chair" (a metal chair with moving parts, which causes acute hyperextension of the spine and severe pressure on the victim's neck and limbs), urological and kidney problems, and an ulcer, which can be attributed to a poor diet and unhygienic prison conditions.

The authorities are reported to have asked Nizar Nayyuf to change his political beliefs, stop his opposition to the government of Hafez al-Assad, and distance himself from the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Freedoms and Human Rights (CDF), of which he is a leading member, as a pre-condition for providing him with medical care.

Amnesty International believes that by allowing this situation to continue and by denying Nizar Nayyuf the medical care he urgently requires, the Syrian authorities are violating the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Syria is a state party and the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, which stipulates in Rule 22.(2) that: "Sick prisoners who require specialist treatment shall be transferred to specialised institutions or to civil hospitals". The organisation considers this to be degrading and inhuman treatment which must not be allowed to continue.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Nizar Nayyuf was arrested, together with nine others, in January 1992, as a result of his involvement in CDF. He was subsequently sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment on charges of founding an unlawful organisation, disseminating false information, and undermining the socialist government of President Hahez al-Assad.

Nizar Nayyuf spent the first ten months of his sentence at Sahnaya Military Prison in Damascus, after which he was transferred to the desert Tadmur military prison, notorious for its harsh conditions. Soon after his arrival at the prison, he went on a hunger trike lasting 13 days in protest at the conditions. He is currently detained at Mezze Military Prison. He has reportedly been tortured and ill-treated throughout his detention.

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

- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of prisoner of conscience, Nizar Nayyuf, imprisoned since January 1992;

- urging that he be given immediate access to specialist medical treatment at a specialised institution or a civil hospital;
- requesting that he be allowed unrestricted access to his wife and daughter and other members of his family.

**APPEALS TO:**

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

**COPIES TO:**

His Excellency  
Dr Muhammad Harba  
Minster of the Interior  
Ministry of the Interior  
Merjeh Circle  
Damascus  
Syrian Arab Republic  
**Faxes: + 963 11 222 3428**  
**Telexes: 411016 AFIRS SY**

His Excellency  
Nasser Qaddur  
Minister of State for Foreign Affairs  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Al-Rashid 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

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 22 October 1998.

**"No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment".**

**Article 5, Universal Declaration of Human Rights**