

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 24/16/00

22 May 2000

Further information on UA 238/98 (MDE 24/15/98, 10 September 1998) and follow-up (MDE 24/14/00, 27 April 2000) - Medical concern/prisoner of conscience

**SYRIA Nizar Nayyuf**

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Contrary to reports that he has been released, Amnesty International has learned from Nizar Nayyuf's family that he is still held in Mezze Prison. Amnesty International regrets the confusion caused by the previous update to this Urgent Action, which reported that he had been released.

Nizar Nayyuf's family say they have visited him twice in prison since his supposed release. They report that he is in poor health, unable to walk without a stick and suffering from an eye infection and back pain. Soon after his arrest in 1992 he was reportedly tortured on the "German Chair" (a metal chair with moving parts, which stretches the spine and causes severe pressure on the victim's neck and legs).

It appears that on 26 April he was taken from Mezze and told he would be released if he signed an undertaking not to be involved in any unauthorised political activity, and returned to the prison when he refused to sign.

Several sources reported that he had been released on 22 or 23 April, including the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Freedoms and Human Rights (CDF), of which he is a leading member, and the Coordination Committee for Democracy in Syria (CCDS). His supposed release was first reported by the international newspaper *Al-Hayat* on 26 April, quoting unnamed Syrian official sources.

For some time afterwards there were contradictory reports, and on 7 May CDF spokesman Aktham Nu'aysa, himself a former prisoner of conscience, was quoted by *Al-Hayat* as saying, "Nizar's relatives have not seen him yet, a matter which raises our doubts and concerns about the accuracy of news about his release, and we will follow his case as a prisoner of conscience".

Nizar Nayyuf is serving a 10-year sentence handed down by the Syrian Supreme State Security Court after a grossly unfair trial, for his involvement with the CDF.

Nizar Nayyuf was granted the UNESCO freedom of the press award on International Press Freedom Day, 3 May 2000. In recent years he has received awards for his work in defence of human rights from organisations including *Reporters sans Frontières* and Amnesty International's Tunisian section.

**FURTHER 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.

**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

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 3 July 2000.