

UA 50/07 Incommunicado Detention/Fear of torture or ill-treatmentSYRIA **Jerome (also known as 'Abd al-Rahim) Kwame Hibell (m) , aged 25, British national**

British national Jerome Kwame Hibell is believed to have been detained on 20 December 2006, and is now detained incommunicado, which puts him at grave risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

He has not been seen since 8.30pm on the day he is thought to have been arrested, when he left his home in the capital, Damascus, to visit a friend. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs finally told the British Embassy on 25 February that Jerome Kwame Hibell had been detained, but did not say where or why. The Embassy had been trying to find out what had happened to him since December.

It seems he may have been moved between various detention centres. He has been reported as being detained in Damascus at both Military Intelligence Branch 235, *Far' Falastin* (Palestine Branch) and most recently at a Political Security branch. However, the authorities have refused to say where he is.

Jerome Kwame Hibell converted to Islam at the age of 13. He went to live in Damascus with his partner and their three-year-old son in September 2005 and had been studying Arabic at Damascus University.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Torture is widespread in Syrian detention and investigation centres, particularly during periods of incommunicado detention. Over the years, Amnesty International has documented 38 types of torture and ill-treatment used in Syria. "Confessions" extracted under duress are systematically used as "evidence" in Syrian courts, and the defendants' claims that they have been tortured are almost never investigated. Since 2004 at least 12 people are reported to have died as a result of torture and ill-treatment in custody.

In his report delivered on 27 February 2003 the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, stated that "Torture is most frequently practised during incommunicado detention. Incommunicado detention should be made illegal, and persons held incommunicado should be released without delay."

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

To the Syrian authorities:

- expressing concern that British national Jerome (also known as 'Abd al-Rahim) Kwame Hibell was reportedly detained on 20 December 2006, and is now held at an unknown location, and asking where he is;
- expressing concern that he is detained incommunicado, where torture is most frequently practiced according to the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, and urging the authorities to ensure that Jerome (also known as 'Abd al-Rahim) Kwame Hibell is not tortured;
- calling on them to release Jerome Kwame Hibell immediately and unconditionally unless he is charged with a recognizable criminal offence and given a fair and prompt trial;
- reminding the authorities that Jerome (also known as 'Abd al-Rahim) Kwame Hibell must be given immediate access to a lawyer of his own choosing, his family and any medical treatment he may require;

To the British foreign secretary:

- urging her to continue to use her influence to ensure that Jerome (also known as 'Abd al-Rahim) Kwame Hibell is not tortured or ill-treated in Syrian custody, and is allowed visits from British Consular staff and his family, as well as access to a lawyer of his choice and any medical assistance he may require.

APPEALS TO:

Syrian authorities

President

His Excellency Bashar al-Assad
Presidential Palace
al-Rashid Street
Damascus
Syrian Arab Republic
Fax: +963 11 332 3410
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Defence

His Excellency General Hassan Ali Turkmani
Ministry of Defence
Omayyad Square
Damascus
Syrian Arab Republic
Fax: +963 11 223 7842
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Foreign Affairs

His Excellency Walid Mu'allim
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
al-Rashid Street
Damascus
Syrian Arab Republic
Fax: + 963 11 332 7620
Salutation: Your Excellency

British authorities

Secretary of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Right Honourable Margaret Beckett, MP
Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH
United Kingdom
Fax: + 44 20 7008 2144
Salutation: Dear Secretary of State

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 13 April 2007.*****