

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 24/22/98

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Further information on EXTRA 71/98 (MDE 24/14/98, 5 October 1998) and follow-up (MDE 24/19/98, 19 October 1998) - Health concern / Legal concern

SYRIA' Abd al-Majid Nimer Zaghmout, a Palestinian, aged 54

Amnesty International is concerned at the serious deterioration in the health of long-term detainee 'Abd al-Majid Nimer Zaghmout, who has been recently diagnosed with cancer (nasopharyngeal carcinoma) and who needs urgent and specialist treatment.

'Abd al-Majid Nimer Zaghmout, a Palestinian detained for the last 32 years, also has a number of other serious health problems. In addition to an untreated ear infection, probably caused by unhygienic prison conditions and medical neglect, he has heart disease, high blood pressure and psychological problems. He was admitted to a prison hospital in October 1998, but only after going on a hunger strike in protest at his continued detention. At the time he was comatose and had internal bleeding caused by a chronic untreated ulcer.

'Abd al-Majid Nimer Zaghmout, a former member of Fatah -- a mainstream faction in the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) -- was arrested in 1966 and charged with the murder of Palestinian guerrilla leader Yusuf 'Urabi. He denies this and alleges he was tortured for 46 days after his arrest to force him to admit to the crime. He was later sentenced to death by a military court after an unfair trial. The sentence, however, was never carried out and he remains in prison despite a ruling nine years ago by the Minister of Defence, General Mustafa Talas, that he be released unless charged with another criminal offence.

'Abd al-Majid Nimer Zaghmout is one of hundreds of Syrian political prisoners, including prisoners of conscience, who have been detained for years in Syrian jails, many without charge or trial, and others after grossly unfair trials.

'Abd al-Majid Nimer Zaghmout may be the longest serving political prisoner in the Middle East.

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

- expressing grave concern at the deteriorating health of 'Abd al-Majid Nimer Zaghmout and urging the Syrian government to give him access to any specialist medical care he needs;
- urging the Syrian authorities to immediately release 'Abd al-Majid Nimer Zaghmout, who has been in detention for 32 years after an unfair trial, and whose release was ordered nine years ago by Minister of Defence, General Mustafa Talas;
- urging the authorities to review his case and to investigate the reason for his continued detention;
- reminding the government of Syria of its commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Article 8: "Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law".

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

His Excellency
Dr Muhammad Harba
Minster of the Interior
Ministry of the Interior
Merjeh Circle
Damascus
Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: Interior Minister, Damascus, Syria
Faxes: + 963 11 222 3428
Telexes: 411016 AFIRS SY
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Lt. Gen. Mustafa Talas
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence
Ministry of Defence
Omayyad Square
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: General Mustafa Talas, Damascus, Syria
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

President Yasser Arafat
Palestinian Authority
Al-Muntada
Gaza
Palestinian Authority
Faxes: + 972 7 282 2365 (ask to send a fax)

His Excellency
Nasser Qaddur
Minister of State for Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Al-Rashid Street
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Faxes: + 963 11 331 0134

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 13 January 1998.

"Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law"

Article 8, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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