

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 24/026/2003

23 July 2003

Further Information on UA 185/03 (MDE 24/020/2003, 24 June 2003) Fear of torture/incommunicado detention/detention without charge New concern: Unfair trial/ Prisoner of conscience

SYRIA

'Abdel Rahman Shaghouri (m), aged 31

Prisoner of conscience, 'Abdel Rahman Shaghouri, has been moved to Sednaya Prison, on the outskirts of the capital Damascus. It is not known whether any charges have been brought against him, though he is at risk of being tried before a military or state security court whose procedures and trials are known to be seriously flawed.

'Abdel Rahman Shaghouri is being held solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression including using the internet. He is not known to have committed any recognizably criminal offence or to have used or advocated violence, and is therefore considered to be a prisoner of conscience.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Internet access in Syria is carefully monitored by the authorities and websites deemed undesirable for political or moral reasons are censored. The cost of internet use is, in any case, beyond the means of most Syrians. Unfettered access can only be achieved by dialling internet service providers in neighbouring countries. Ironically, President Bashar al-Assad was formerly head of the Syrian Computer Society.

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

- urging the authorities to allow 'Abdel Rahman Shaghouri immediate and unrestricted access to his family, lawyer and whatever medical care he may require;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee that he is not tortured or ill-treated in detention;
- calling for his immediate and unconditional release as a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for exercising his legitimate right to freedom of expression.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency President Bashar al-Assad
President of the Republic
Presidential Palace
Abu Rummaneh, Al-Rashid Street
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegram: President al-Assad, Damascus, Syria
Fax: + 963 11 332 3410
Telex: 419160 prespl sy
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Major General Ali Hammud
Minister of the Interior
Ministry of Interior

Merjeh Circle
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegram: Interior Minister, Damascus, Syria
Fax: + 963 11 222 3428
Telex: 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 3 September 2003.