

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 24/29/92  
Distrib: PG/SC

To: Medical professionals

Date: 7 December 1992

*FURTHER INFORMATION ON MEDICAL LETTER-WRITING ACTION*

(See MDE 24/11/92, 12 May 1992 and MDE 24/25/92, 1 September 1992)

**Dr Nour al-Din al-Atassi and others  
SYRIA**

Dr Nour al-Din al-Atassi, aged 63, was released from prison on 28 August 1992 after having spent 22 years in prison. Amnesty International has learned that Dr al-Atassi sadly died of cancer of the oesophagus on 3 December 1992 at the American Hospital in Paris, just three months after being released. He had been flown from Damascus to Paris for medical care about two weeks previously. Dr al-Atassi was a former Syrian President and Prime Minister and had been arrested in November 1970 after his government was overthrown in a coup which brought President Hafez al-Assad to power. Other members or supporters of Dr al-Atassi's government were arrested around the same time for refusing to cooperate with the new government. 14 of them remain in prison, all held without charge or trial as was Dr al-Atassi throughout his imprisonment.

Amnesty International is appealing to the Syrian authorities for the immediate release of the 14 men who still remain in prison and are held in al-Mezze military prison, Damascus. They are also said to be in ill-health due to inadequate medical care and prolonged imprisonment. The 14 are: Salah Jadid, Muhammad 'Id 'Ashawi, Marwan Habache, Muhammad Sa'id Talib, Kamel Hussain, Mijali Nasrawin, Fawzi Rida, Hakim al-Faiz, 'Abd al-Hamid Miqdad, Dafi Jam'ani, Haditha Murade, 'Adel Na'issa, Hassan al-Khatib and Mustafa Rustum. There are four former cabinet ministers among the group and a former ambassador.

Most political prisoners in Syria are held without charge or trial and are denied the most basic legal rights guaranteed under international standards. The majority have been held in these conditions for years - some for over 20 year as in this instance. Amnesty International believes such lengthy detention without trial constitutes a gross violation of international human rights standards and considers that such prolonged detention of indeterminate duration and without recourse to legal protection amounts to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

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SYRIA****Keywords**Theme: POCs/ ill-health/ detention without charge or trialProfession/association: Doctor/ Former Head of State/ Former government ministers**Recommended Actions**

Letters are requested from medical professionals to President Hafez al-Assad:

- referring to the recent death from cancer of Dr Nour al-Din al-Atassi only three months after he was released from a period of almost 22 years' detention without charge or trial
- noting that he was considered by Amnesty International to have been a prisoner of conscience, as are the 14 others named here who were arrested at the same time
- expressing your concern that they have been held for such a lengthy period without charge or trial and without recourse to legal remedy
- expressing your concern for the well-being of the others and at the effects that such lengthy detention of indeterminate duration may have had upon them
- urging their immediate and unconditional release
- Some letters could seek details regarding the diagnosis of Dr al-Atassi's cancer and the treatment he received in prison

**Addresses**

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

**Copies** could be send to Syrian diplomatic representatives in your country

Dr Nour al-Din al-Atassi, former President and Prime Minister,  
died 3 December 1992

Muhammad 'Id 'Ashawi,  
Former Minister of the Interior  
and later Minister of Foreign Affairs

Kamel Hussain  
Former ambassador to France

Mijali Nasrawin,  
Former Ba'th Party official

Salah Jadid,  
Former Army Chief-of-Staff and later

Ba'th Party official