

PUBLIC

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UA 142/04 Incommunicado detention/fear of torture/"disappearance"/medical concern

**SYRIA Aktham Nu'aysa (m), aged 53, lawyer and human rights defender**

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Leading Syrian human rights defender Aktham Nu'aysa was arrested on 13 April, when he presented himself, as ordered, at the department of military security in the city of Latakia, in the west of the country. He has been held incommunicado since then, and the department of military security in the city of Latakia has denied having him in custody. He is at risk of torture. He suffers from an irregular heartbeat and a kidney complaint, both of which require medication.

Amnesty International considers him a prisoner of conscience, arrested solely because of his work in defence of human rights. He is the head of the Committees for the Defence of Democratic Liberties and Human Rights (CDDLHR). The CDDLHR has been spearheading a nationwide campaign for political reform and respect for human rights, and also for an end to the state of emergency which has been in force in Syria since 1963: this has led to arbitrary arrests, unfair trials and severe restrictions on such basic human rights as freedom of expression. In March they organized a sit-down protest in front of the Syrian parliament by around 100 human rights activists, to mark the 41st anniversary of the declaration of the state of emergency. Dozens of activists, including Aktham Nu'aysa, were arrested but released without charge a few hours later.

Aktham Nu'aysa was arrested shortly after the CDDLHR issued its annual report for 2003, which detailed serious human rights violations in Syria. The authorities have subjected human rights defenders in the country to arbitrary arrest, restriction of movement and intimidation and other abuses. He had recently said that the CDDLHR was preparing a petition to be presented to the Syrian President calling for the lifting of the state of emergency and respect for human rights.

A founding member of the CDDLHR, Aktham Nu'aysa had been detained as a prisoner of conscience from 1991 to 1998, because of his human rights work. In 1992 he was sentenced to nine years in prison after a grossly unfair trial by the Supreme State Security Court. He was tortured and ill-treated in custody. Amnesty International organized numerous actions to secure his release, and he was eventually freed two years before the end of his sentence. Since then the security forces have harassed him constantly because of his involvement with the CDDLHR. They have also threatened his family, and in 2003 attacked and beat his mother to intimidate him.

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

- expressing grave concern at the arrest of Aktham Nu'aysa ;
- calling for him to be released immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for his legitimate work in defence of human rights and the peaceful expression of his opinions;
- asking the authorities to reveal where Aktham Nu'aysa is held, and urging them to ensure that he is treated humanely, provided with any medical care he may require and not tortured or ill-treated;
- reminding the authorities that the arrest of Aktham Nu'aysa and the repression of other human rights defenders in the country is an affront to Syria's obligations under international human rights law, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Syria is a state party.

**APPEALS TO:**

His Excellency Bashar al-Assad

President  
Presidential Palace  
Abu Rummaneh  
al-Rashid Street  
Damascus  
Syrian Arab Republic  
**Telegram:** President al-Assad, Damascus, Syria  
**Fax:** + 963 11 332 3410  
**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 26 May 2004.