

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 24/064/2006

19 October 2006

Further information on UA 222/06 (MDE 24/052/2006, 18 August 2006) Incommunicado detention / fear of torture or ill-treatment New concern: Possible prisoner of conscience

SYRIA 'Ali Sayed al-Shihabi (m), aged 50, English language teacher

'Ali Sayed al-Shihabi was visited by his family on or before 17 October. He appeared to be in good health. This visit was the first that his family had been allowed since he was detained by State Security agents in the capital, Damascus, on 10 August. On 10 October he was questioned by a judge at the Justice Palace in Damascus and transferred from the State Security centre at Kafr Soussa, Damascus, to 'Adra prison, just outside the city. His family is now allowed to visit him every Tuesday. 'Ali Sayed al-Shihabi may be a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful expression of his views.

It is not known which court will hear his case, nor when. He reportedly faces charges of "attempting to form a political party", and charges relating to signing the "Beirut-Damascus Declaration", a document signed by hundreds of Syrian and Lebanese nationals, calling upon their two governments to normalise relations by exchanging ambassadors and defining their shared borders.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Of several hundred Syrian and Lebanese nationals who signed the "Beirut-Damascus Declaration" of 12 May this year, 10 were arrested shortly afterwards. Of the two still detained, one of these, writer Michel Kilo, was today ordered to be released on bail. The other, lawyer and human rights defender Anwar al-Bunni remains detained at 'Adra prison (see UA 142/06, MDE 24/039/2006, 19 May 2006, and follow-ups).

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

- welcoming news that 'Ali Sayed al-Shihabi was allowed a visit from his family and appears to be in good health, and encouraging the authorities to allow him unrestricted access to his family, as well as to a lawyer and to any medical assistance he may require;
- seeking assurances that 'Ali Sayed al-Shihabi will be well-treated, and not tortured or ill-treated, while in custody;
- calling for the release of 'Ali Sayed al-Shihabi as he appears to be a prisoner of conscience, held solely for the peaceful expression of his views.

APPEALS TO:

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

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 30 November 2006.