

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 24/022/2004

18 March 2004

Further Information on UA 185/03 (MDE 24/020/2003, 24 June 2003, and follow ups (MDE 24/026/2003, 23 July 2003; MDE 24/039/2003, 5 November 2003) - Prisoner of conscience/legal concern/torture and other ill-treatment

SYRIA **'Abdel Rahman Shaghouri (m), aged 31**

Prisoner of conscience 'Abdel Rahman Shaghouri had his trial adjourned until 2 May 2004 by the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC) on 15 March. The SSSC had previously adjourned his case in December 2003.

He has been charged with offences connected to his use of internet sites containing political stories and sending news stories to friends. He remains in Sednaya prison and apparently has not been given access to his lawyer and family since his arrest on 23 February 2003.

'Abdel Rahman Shaghouri was reportedly beaten in custody after his arrest before he was moved to Sednaya prison. He is now facing not only prolonged incommunicado detention, which puts him in danger of torture and other ill-treatment, but also the prospect of an unfair trial. On the basis of evidence collected over the years by Amnesty International, trials before the SSSC invariably fall short of international standards for fair trial. The SSSC places severe restrictions on the defendant's right to obtain effective legal representation and its verdicts are not subject to appeal before a higher tribunal. Amnesty International has voiced concerns over the years that the SSSC appears to be neither independent nor impartial.

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

- calling for 'Abdel Rahman Shaghouri to be released immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for exercising his legitimate right to freedom of expression;
- expressing concern about the SSSC trial scheduled for May, noting that this court falls far short of international standards for fair trial proceedings;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee that 'Abdel Rahman Shaghouri will not be tortured or ill-treated in detention;
- urging the authorities to ensure that during his detention 'Abdel Rahman Shaghouri's rights are fully respected, including the right to prompt access to, and assistance from, a lawyer of his own choosing, and the right to communicate with and receive visits from his family.

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 29 April 2004.