

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 24/043/2004

UA 201/04

Prisoner of conscience/fear of torture or ill-treatment

16 June 2004

SYRIA

Muhammad Jum'ah Quban (m), aged 57, former Politburo member of the Democratic Ba'th Party

Prisoner of conscience, Muhammad Jum'ah Quban is being held in incommunicado detention at an unknown location where he is at risk of torture or ill-treatment. As a former leading member of the banned Democratic B'ath Party, Muhammad Jum'ah Quban has been arrested by two different security departments within a short space of time in a governmental crack-down on freedom of expression and association.

Muhammad Jum'ah Quban was first arrested by members of the Department of Political Security on 11 May, after reportedly making a telephone call to a fellow political activist Fa'iq al-Mira, who is a leading member of the Communist Party Political Bureau (CPPB). He was reportedly charged with possessing publications "inciting discord among... the nation" and sentenced by a military court to a term of imprisonment equivalent to the time already served and his release ordered.

As Muhammad Jum'ah Quban was about to be released, members of the Military Security department re-arrested him and took him to an unknown location. His re-arrest is believed to be connected to his alleged involvement in political activities and the possession of unauthorized political literature published by opposition groups.

He has previously spent 16 years in prison in connection with his political activities as a member of the Democratic B'ath Party.

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

- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Muhammad Jum'ah Quban as a prisoner of conscience held solely for his peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression;
- urging that he be allowed immediate and unrestricted access to his family and lawyer as well as any medical care he may require;
- calling on the authorities to stop their systematic attacks on freedom of expression and association and reminding them about their obligations under international human rights law, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Syria is a state party.

APPEALS TO:

President

His Excellency Bashar al-Assad

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

Minister of the Interior

His Excellency Major General 'Ali Hammud

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 28 July 2004.