

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 24/035/2003

18 September 2003

Further Information UA 188/03 (MDE 24/021/2003, 26 June 2003) Possible prisoners of conscience/torture and ill-treatment/incommunicado detention New concerns: Unfair trial/medical concern

SYRIA **Mohammed Mustafa (m)**
 Khaled Ahmed 'Ali (m)
 Sherif Ramadhan (m)
 'Amr Mourad (m)
 Salar Saleh (m)
 Hosam Muhammed Amin (m)
 Hussayn Ramadhan (m)

New name: **Mas'oud Hamid (m)**

The Syrian Kurds named above have been moved to the political wing of 'Adra Prison, near the capital Damascus, where they are being held in solitary confinement in cruel and inhumane conditions. Prior to their move, the men were reportedly tortured for 23 days at the security branch of Mezze police station in Damascus. There are concerns for their health, which is reportedly deteriorating.

Earlier in August or September, the men were said to have appeared blindfolded and without legal representation in front of the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC), whose trials Amnesty International considers to be grossly unfair.

Mas'oud Hamid, a second-year media student at Damascus University, was reportedly arrested by political security officers on 24 July, while he was taking an exam. He is also said to have participated in the 25 June peaceful demonstration to mark World Children's Day, outside the UNICEF headquarters in Damascus, at which the other seven men were arrested.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In April 2001, the Human Rights Committee - the body of experts that monitors implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) - expressed concern about the procedures of the SSSC. They stated that these procedures were incompatible with the provisions of the ICCPR, to which Syria is a state party. The Committee stated that: "The public nature of proceedings before the [Supreme] State Security Court is not guaranteed. The Committee is also concerned about allegations... that the Court has rejected complaints of torture, even in flagrant cases, and that some legal representatives have withdrawn in protest against the failure to respect the rights of the defence. Moreover, the Committee notes that the State Security Court's decisions are not subject to appeal."

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

- expressing concern at the reported torture and ill-treatment of the eight Syrian Kurds named above, who are reportedly being held in solitary confinement at 'Adra Prison;
- asking that they be allowed immediate and unrestricted access to their family, lawyer or any medical care that they may need;
- calling for the eight men to be immediately released, unless they are to be charged with a recognisable criminal offence;

- urging the Syrian authorities to respect the right to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly in accordance with international human rights standards such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Syria is a state-party;
- expressing concern at the men's appearance before the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC), in light of the reservations expressed by the UN Human Rights Committee.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency President Bashar al-Assad
President of the Republic
Presidential Palace

Abu Rummaneh, Al-Rashid Street
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

Telegrams: President al-Assad, Damascus, Syria

Telexes: 419160 prespl sy

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

Telegrams: Interior Minister, Damascus, Syria

Telexes: 411016 AFIRS SY

Fax: + 963 11 222 3428

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 October 2003.