

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: MDE 24/039/2002 (Public)  
News Service No: 145  
19 August 2002

## Syria: The price of defending human rights

Amnesty International today strongly condemned the sentencing today of human rights defender and lawyer Habib 'Isa to 5 years' imprisonment for his activities in defence of human rights. Habib 'Isa was charged among other things with "attempting to change the Constitution by illegal means".

"This sentence is the result of a grossly unfair trial and is intended to halt Habib 'Isa's activities as a human rights defender and lawyer," Amnesty International said, recalling Habib 'Isa's involvement in the defence of Syrian prisoners of conscience. The organization considers Habib 'Isa to be a prisoner of conscience himself, and is calling for his immediate and unconditional release.

Amnesty International considers trials before the SSSC to be grossly unfair. There is no right for appeal and "confessions" extracted under duress are accepted as evidence.

### Background

Fifty-six year old Habib 'Isa was arrested at his home in Damascus on 12 September 2001 as part of a crackdown on opposition political activists and members of the newly emerging human rights movement. He was one of the defence lawyers for former parliamentarian and prisoner of conscience Riad Seif, who was sentenced to 5 years in prison on 4 April 2002 following an unfair trial before the Criminal Court in Damascus. Habib 'Isa is also one of the founding members of the Human Rights Association in Syria.

Public Document

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