

30 August 2002

Further information on UA 226/01 (24/029/2001, 7 September 2001) and follow-ups (MDE 24/030/2001, 11 September 2001), (MDE 24/033/2001, 20 September 2001), (MDE 24/010/2002, 4 April 2002), (MDE 24/011/2002, 19 April 2002) and (MDE 24/020/2002, 25 June 2002) - Prisoner of Conscience/Unfair trial/Ill-Health/Ill-Treatment

SYRIARIad Seif (m), aged 54, Parliamentarian  
Hassan Sa'dun (m), Retired teacher  
'Aref Dalilah (m), aged in his early 60s, Economist  
Walid al-Bunni (m), aged 38, Physician  
Kamal al-Labwani (m), aged 44, Physician  
Habib Saleh (m), aged 52, Businessperson  
Habib 'Isa (m), aged 55, Lawyer  
Fawaz Tello (m), Engineer

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All the detainees named above have now been tried and sentenced to prison terms, either by the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC) or the Criminal Court. One of the men has allegedly been ill-treated in prison. Amnesty International considers their trials to be grossly unfair and calls for their immediate release as prisoners of conscience held solely for the peaceful expression of their political opinion.

On 4 April, former MP Riad Seif was sentenced to five years' imprisonment by the Criminal Court on charges including attempting to change the Constitution by illegal means and inciting ethnic strife. He was arrested without a warrant on 6 September 2001, even though this was before his parliamentary immunity had been removed. He was denied an adequate public hearing as well as confidential access to his lawyers, who were not allowed to call in defence witnesses.

On 24 June, Habib Saleh was sentenced by the SSSC to three years in prison on charges of opposing the objectives of the revolution and inciting racial and sectarian strife.

On 31 July, 'Aref Dalilah and Walid al-Bunni were sentenced by the SSSC to ten and five years' imprisonment respectively, on charges including attempting to change the constitution by illegal means. Amnesty International is concerned about the health of 'Aref Dalilah, who is suffering from deep-vein thrombosis and has reportedly still not received the urgent medical treatment he requires for this condition (see follow-up MDE 24/011/2002, 19 April 2002). 'Aref Dalilah was allegedly ill-treated and beaten while held at Adra prison. On 3 June, the court chairperson, a military officer, ordered his lawyer Anwar al-Bunni out of the court and issued a decision banning him indefinitely from practising before the SSSC, after Anwar al-Bunni demanded the minuting and investigation by the Criminal Court of these allegations of ill-treatment of 'Aref Dalilah.

On 19 August, Habib 'Isa was sentenced by the SSSC to five years in prison on charges including attempting to change the Constitution by illegal means.

On 28 August, Fawaz Tello, Hassan Sa'dun and Kamal al-Labwani were sentenced by the SSSC. Fawaz Tello was sentenced to five years in prison on charges of attempting to change the Constitution by illegal means. Hassan Sa'dun was sentenced to two years in prison on charges of communication of false information. Kamal al-Labwani was sentenced to three years in prison on charges of inciting armed revolt.

Amnesty International considers trials held before the SSSC to be grossly unfair. 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".

**Many thanks to all those who sent appeals. We will now use longer-term campaigning methods on behalf of the men named above. Please send a final round of appeals in Arabic, English, French or your own language:**

- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of the men named above, as prisoners of conscience held solely for the peaceful expression of their political opinion;
- urging the authorities to provide 'Aref Dalilah and all the men named above with any medical treatment they may need;
- demanding an impartial and independent investigation into the allegations of ill-treatment of 'Aref Dalilah, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- expressing concern at the grossly unfair trial and sentencing of the men named above, and -calling for the procedures of the State Security Court (SSSC) to conform with the requirements of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Syria is a state party.

**APPEALS TO:**

His Excellency  
 President Bashar al-Assad  
 Presidential Palace  
 Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic  
**Telegrams: President al-Assad, Damascus, Syria**  
**Telexes: 419160 prespl sy**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

His Excellency  
 Nabil al-Khatib  
 Ministry of Justice  
 Al-Nasr Street  
 Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic  
**Telegrams: Justice Minister, Damascus, Syria**  
**e-mail: moj@net.sy**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

His Excellency  
 Maj-Gen Ali Hammud  
 Minister of the Interior  
 Ministry of the Interior  
 Merjeh Circle  
 Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic  
**Telegrams: Interior Minister, Damascus, Syria**  
**Telexes: 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 11 October 2002.