

26 November 2001

AI Index MDE 24/044/2001 - News Service Nr. 209

### **News Flash**

## **Syria: Release of political prisoners -- a positive step**

*The release last week of dozens of long term political prisoners belonging to the unauthorised Muslim Brotherhood is a welcome step towards greater respect for human rights in Syria, Amnesty International said today.*

*"The Syrian authorities should now release all prisoners of conscience and long term political prisoners who have been languishing in jail for years, cut off from the outside world and their loved ones while serving sentences passed after grossly unfair trials," the organization added.*

*Those released -- apparently as a result of an amnesty issued by President Bashar al-Assad -- included 'Imad Zinko, Mahmud 'Uthman, Hashim Majzub, and Khaled al-Shami. All of them are leading members of the Muslim Brotherhood who had been in detention since the early 1980s following violent confrontations between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Syrian authorities.*

*All were held for most of their detention period at Tadmur Military Prison from where they were moved to Sednaya Prison in recent months. They were mostly held incommunicado during the course of their detention and subjected to torture and ill-treatment while held in cruel, inhuman and degrading conditions.*

**\ENDS**

public document

\*\*\*\*\*

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566  
Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW web : <http://www.amnesty.org>