

PUBLIC

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Fear of Torture or ill-treatment / Legal Concern / Possible Prisoners of Conscience

1 February 2000

SYRIA

‘Abd al-Khaleq Najm al-Din Hakemi
Wajih al-Kurdi
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Mundher Nazzar Darwish
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‘Ammar Riyad Halwani
Lu’ay ‘Abd al-Hafiz al-‘Akhras
Muhammad Khawjeh
Bashir Abu Leben
Mushir Abu Leben
Muhammad Mundu

and more than 300 others

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of hundreds of political opponents who have reportedly been arrested since 12 December 1999. Torture and ill-treatment is systematically used against political detainees in Syria.

The military intelligence (*al-mukhabarat al-‘askariya*) and other branches of the Syrian security forces have made the arrests in Homs, Aleppo, Damascus and other parts of the country. Those arrested come from political or religious groups which oppose the peace process with Israel and include large numbers of members of Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brothers or *Hizb al-Tahrir* (the Liberation Party) as well as supporters of leftist groups. They are also said to include former political detainees and people who are unaligned but who oppose the peace process.

Information about the arrests is very hard to get. Only recently have the names of a few of those arrested been made public (see above). Many may be prisoners of conscience.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Peace talks between the Syrian Foreign Minister, Farouk al-Shara’ and the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak resumed on 15 December 1999 in Washington.

Hundreds of people are in prison in Syria for political reasons, some for many years without charge or trial; others have been brought to trial before the Supreme State Security Court where trials fall far short of fair trial standards.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/express/airmail letters in Arabic, English, French or your own language:

- expressing concern at reports that hundreds of political opponents have been arrested in the last few weeks;
- asking that all those detained in the recent arrests be treated humanely and given access to their families, lawyers and medical care;
- asking for the whereabouts and names of all those detained to be disclosed as a matter of urgency;
- calling for those detained to be immediately released unless they are charged with a recognizably criminal offence.

APPEALS TO:

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

His Excellency Lt. General Mustafa Talas
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence
Ministry of Defence
Ommayyad Square
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: General Talas, Damascus, Syria
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Dr Muhammad Harba
Minister of Interior
Ministry of Interior
Merjeh Circle
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: Interior Minister, Damascus, Syria
Faxes: +963 222 34 28
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Hussein Hassun
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Al Nasr Street, Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: Justice Minister, Damascus, Syria
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

His Excellency Nasser Qaddur
Minister of State for Foreign Affairs
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Al-Rashid Street, Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Faxes: + 963 11 332 0686

and 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 29 February 2000.