

PUBLIC

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To: Health professionals
From: Medical office / East Mediterranean team
Date: 2 October 2000

MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION

Lack of medical care

**Veysi Özgür (alias Bengin Ahmet Kamis)
SYRIA**

Key words ill-health / lack of medical care / political prisoner

Summary

Amnesty International is concerned for the health of political prisoner Veysi Özgür (born in 1968) in Adra Prison in Damascus. He has reportedly not received medical treatment for an injury to his left arm, sustained prior to being imprisoned, and he is also reported to have kidney problems. Veysi Özgür, a Kurd born in Turkey and a former medical student, has been imprisoned for four years in Adra Prison without having been charged or tried.

Recommended actions

Please write politely-worded letters:

- introducing yourself as a member of the health professional network of Amnesty International;
- expressing concern about the state of health of Veysi Özgür and asking for further details about his current state of health;
- urging that he be medically examined to make a proper diagnosis and determination of his medical needs and that he be provided with all necessary medical care, by appropriate specialists if necessary;
- stating your belief that all prisoners in Syria should have access to adequate medical care in conformity with the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners;
- asking if recognizably criminal charges are not to be brought against Veysi Özgür, that he be immediately released;
- urging that he be allowed unrestricted access to his family and to a lawyer of his choice.

If you receive no reply from the government or other recipients within two months of dispatch of your letter, please send a follow up letter seeking a response. Please check with the medical team if you are sending appeals after 1 December 2000, and send copies of any replies you do receive to the International Secretariat (att: medical team).

Addresses

His Excellency Dr Bashar al-Assad
President
Presidential Palace
Abu Rummaneh, Al-Rashid Street
Damascus,
Syrian Arab Republic
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Dr. Muhammad Harba
Minister of the Interior
Ministry of the Interior
Merjeh Circle
Damascus
Syrian Arab Republic
Faxes: + 963 11 222 3428
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Nasser Qaddour
Minister of State for Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Al-Rashid Street
Damascus,
Syrian Arab Republic
Faxes: + 963 11 224 5747

Please send copies of your letters to diplomatic representatives of Syria accredited to your country.

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MEDICAL CONCERN

**Lack of medical care
Veysi Özgür (alias Bengin Ahmet Kamis)
SYRIA**

Amnesty International is concerned for the health of political prisoner Veysi Özgür (born in 1968) in Adra prison in Damascus. He has not received medical treatment for an injury to his left arm, sustained prior to being imprisoned, and he is also reported to have kidney problems. Veysi Özgür, a Kurdish man and former medical student born in Turkey, has been imprisoned for four years in Damascus without having been charged or tried.

Background information

On 9 September 1996 Veysi Özgür was injured in a motorcycle accident while driving with a friend in the Syrian town of Amude. Veysi Özgür bled heavily from his left arm and lost consciousness. He was taken to hospital but only received treatment after police had been informed of his whereabouts. The accident left him with loss of movement in his left arm. When he regained consciousness he explained to the police that he was a politically active Kurd and gave a false name [Bengin Ahmet Kamis].

There has been a pattern in Syria of arrests of Kurds because they are believed to be working with Kurdish political movements. Political detainees have frequently been held for long periods without charge or trial.

Police took Veysi Özgür from the hospital to Adra Prison in Damascus. After his brother had been unofficially informed that Veysi Özgür was being held in Adra Prison, he went to visit him in May 1999. Veysi Özgür remains in Adra Prison four years after his arrest without having been charged or tried. In addition, he has not been allowed to receive cards and letters sent him.

Previous political imprisonment

Veysi Özgür studied medicine at the Dicle University in Diyarbakir, Turkey, from 1986 to 1989. In 1989 he was imprisoned for joining a demonstration on behalf of political prisoners in Eskisehir Prison. After appeals for his freedom, including from Amnesty International, he was released in 1990 after eight months' imprisonment. After his release he went back to Diyarbakir to continue his medical studies, but as a former political prisoner he was not allowed to study at any Turkish university.

Current health

Veysi Özgür's family was allowed to visit him twice in 1999 and twice in 2000, the last visit being on 12 June 2000. His family have said his health is gradually deteriorating. He has complained of pains in his left hand. He is also reported to suffer from kidney problems for which he has reportedly received no medical treatment.

In January 1996 prior to being imprisoned he lost his left leg from below the knee after treading on a landmine near the southern Iraqi border. He was eventually given an artificial limb in prison but only after a hunger strike which lasted for 45 days in November/December 1998.