

11 August 1998

Further information on UA 145/98 (MDE 24/02/98, 7 May 1998) - Medical concern/Prisoners of Conscience/Fear of Torture or Ill-treatment

SYRIA

Nu'man 'Abdu, journalist

Jurays al-Talli, retired teacher

Salama George Kayla, writer and journalist

Mahmud 'Isa, English language teacher

Amnesty International has received information that Jurays al-Talli, Nu'man 'Abdu, Salama George Kayla, and Mahmud 'Isa - all serving sentences of up to 15 years in connection with their involvement in the Party for Communist Action and their peaceful opposition to the Syrian Government - were transferred at the end of July to Tadmur Military Prison apparently as a form of punishment. Amnesty International fears that the above-named prisoners of conscience may be tortured and ill-treated, and suffer inhuman and degrading treatment.

Three of these prisoners Jurays al-Talli, Nu'man 'Abdu and Salama George Kayla, have been suffering from health conditions that require specialist medical care, and their health conditions may deteriorate as a result of their transfer to Tadmur Prison.

Nu'man 'Abdu, a journalist, is suffering from a chronic open leg wound according to reports provided by former prisoners. Jurays al-Talli, a retired teacher, is suffering from diabetes and serious ear problems, which are believed to have affected his hearing. Salama George Kayla, a Palestinian writer and journalist, is believed to be suffering from high blood pressure.

Tadmur prison is a desert prison built underground and known to be seriously lacking in proper ventilation, and facilities for personal hygiene and accommodation. Prisoners are held incommunicado and denied access to their families. Amnesty International considers holding prisoners in such conditions to be a violation of Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Syria is a State Party, and the provisions of the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Hundreds of prisoners of conscience and political prisoners are currently serving long-term prison sentences of up to 22 years in Syria in connection with their involvement and membership of various unauthorised political parties. Torture and ill-treatment of such prisoners is routine, particularly during the interrogation stage of detention. At present, dozens of prisoners of conscience and political prisoners are held beyond the expiry of sentences handed down by the Supreme State Security Court after grossly unfair trials in connection with their involvement in political parties opposed to the government of Hafez al-Assad. Furthermore, lack of medical care and/or torture and ill-treatment have led to dozens of deaths in custody in recent years.

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

-calling for the immediate release of Jurays al-Talli, Nu'man 'Abdu, Salama George Kayla, and Mahmud 'Isa as prisoners of conscience;

-urging the Syrian authorities to provide Jurays al-Talli, Nu'man 'Abdu and Salama George Kayla with whatever medical care they may require and to allow all the detainees access to their families;
 -seeking assurances that these prisoners of conscience are not being subjected to torture and ill-treatment;
 -calling on the Syrian authorities to take immediate steps to ensure that the provisions of the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners are applied in all Syrian prisons and detention centres.

APPEALS TO:

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

COPIES TO:

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

His Excellency Nasser Qaddur
 Minister of State for Foreign Affairs
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 Al-Rashid Street
 Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telex: 411 922
Fax: + 963 11 2245747

His Excellency
 Dr Iyad al-Shatti
 Minister of Health
 Ministry of Health
 al-Majlis al-Niyabi Street
 Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

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 22 September 1998.

'No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.'