

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Further information on UA 385/91 (MDE 24/08/91, 11 November 1991) and follow-up MDE 24/08/92 of 1 May 1992 - Prisoner of conscience/health concern

**SYRIA:Dr Nour al-Din al-Atassi
and 15 others**

Dr Nour al-Din al-Atassi's heart condition is now reported to be stable following treatment at Teshrin Hospital in Damascus following a heart attack suffered at the end of April 1992. His wife and children are said to be allowed to visit him regularly in the hospital.

However, his general state of health continues to be a serious concern for his family. While undergoing investigations at the hospital he was apparently found to have intestinal polyps for which doctors reportedly recommend a surgical operation. However, because of his heart condition and poor health, the doctors are said to be unable to carry out the operation for at least another five to six weeks.

Amnesty International is calling on the Syrian authorities to ensure that Dr Nour al-Din al-Atassi continues to receive all necessary medical care. It is also renewing its appeals for his immediate and unconditional release.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Dr Nour al-Din al-Atassi, former President of the Republic and Prime Minister of Syria, is a member of a group of people arrested in 1970 and 1971 following the November 1970 coup which brought President Hafez al-Assad to power. All served in or were connected with the former government and were arrested for refusing to cooperate with the new government. Sixteen of them remain in detention without charge or trial in al-Mezze Military Prison.

Some of them were allegedly tortured after arrest, and they are all said to be in poor health as a result of prolonged detention and inadequate medical facilities. All 16 are adopted by Amnesty International as prisoners of conscience. Over the years the organization has repeatedly expressed concern over their health and appealed for their immediate and unconditional release.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/airmail letters:

- welcoming the news that Dr Nour al-Din al-Atassi's heart condition appears to have improved slightly, but expressing concern that his general state of health is still worrying;

- seeking assurances that he will continue to receive all medical treatment necessary during his illness and that he as well as the other 15 detainees arrested with him will be given regular medical attention;

- expressing concern at their continued detention without trial for almost 22 years and calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all 16 detainees as prisoners of conscience.

Page 2 of 2FU 385/91

APPEALS TO

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

2) His Excellency Muhammad Harba **Salutation: Your Excellency**
Minister of the Interior
Ministry of the Interior
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: Interior Minister, Damascus, Syria

3) His Excellency Khaled al-Ansari **Salutation: Your Excellency**
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Nasr Street
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: Justice Minister, Damascus, Syria

4) His Excellency Dr. Iyad al-Shatti **Salutation: Your Excellency**
Minister of Health
Ministry of Health
al-Majlis al-Niyabi Street
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: Health Minister, Damascus, Syria
Telexes: health 412655 sy

5) His Excellency Faruq al-Shar'a **Salutation: Your Excellency**
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Al-Rashid Street
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegram: Foreign Affairs Minister, Damascus, Syria
Telexes: 411922

COPIES TO:

Medical Association:
Dr. M. Cherif Bakle
Ordre des Mediciens Syriens
Place de l'Etoile
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

and to diplomatic representatives of Syria in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 23 June 1992.