

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

AI Index: MDE 24/011/2011
Date: 14 March 2011

Syrian prisoner of conscience ‘Ali al-‘Abdullah sentenced to new jail term

Amnesty International today condemned the sentencing of Syrian prisoner of conscience ‘Ali al-‘Abdullah to 18 months’ imprisonment yesterday and called for his immediate and unconditional release.

‘Ali al-‘Abdullah, a journalist and political activist, was convicted of “spoil[ing] Syria’s relations with another country”, based on comments he had made to a news agency about elections in Lebanon and Iran.

He was convicted after an unfair trial before the Second Criminal Military Court in Damascus. He was repeatedly denied the right to meet privately with his lawyers, who also did not have access to the full case file.

Amnesty International considers ‘Ali al-‘Abdullah to be a prisoner of conscience held solely for the peaceful expression of his beliefs. It urges the Syrian authorities not only to release him but to drop the charge against him, as it does not correspond to an internationally recognizable criminal offence.

On 17 June 2010 he completed a 30-month sentence imposed for his involvement with the Damascus Declaration for Democratic National Change, a broad-based opposition coalition. However, he was not released but rather referred to court and charged with “spoil[ing] Syria’s relations with another country”. The charge related to his comments, made from prison in June 2009 to an Italian news agency, in which he praised elections which had taken place in Lebanon and criticized the Iranian authorities’ use of excessive force against peaceful protestors demonstrating against the disputed presidential election results.

Prior to that, ‘Ali al-‘Abdullah had been imprisoned on three separate occasions.

ENDS/

Public Document
International Secretariat, Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW, UK
www.amnesty.org
