

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 25/002/2008

29 May 2008

UA 143/08

Forcible return/Torture

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE)

'Abd al-Rahman Abu Zaid (m), aged 65, Syrian national

The UAE authorities are planning to forcibly return 'Abd al-Rahman Abu Zaid to Syria, where he would be at risk of torture: he is understood to be a member of the outlawed Syrian Muslim Brotherhood.

Syrian national 'Abd al-Rahman Abu Zaid has lived and worked in the UAE since 1976. He was arrested in early May and moved to the central prison in Dubai on 21 May, apparently in preparation for forcibly returning him to Syria.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The rights to freedom of expression and association are strictly controlled in Syria. The state of emergency, in force since 1963, gives the security forces sweeping powers to detain people, and there are thousands of political prisoners in the country, including members of the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood, jailed after unfair trials. In 2007 Amnesty International received reports of some 1500 people being detained for political reasons, many of them prisoners of conscience. More than 170 people were sentenced in 2007 after grossly unfair trials before the Supreme State Security Court, Criminal Court or Military Court. The majority were alleged to be Islamists. Affiliation to the Muslim Brotherhood is punishable by death under Law 49 of 1980, although in recent years the sentence is usually commuted to 12 years' imprisonment. Amnesty International is aware of many cases in which returnees to Syria who are real or suspected supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood have been tortured and ill-treated.

Torture in interrogation and detention centres is widespread in Syria. "Confessions" extracted under duress are systematically used as "evidence" in Syrian courts, and defendants' claims that they have been tortured are almost never investigated. According to Syrian human rights organizations, in 2007 at least three people died as a result of torture and other ill-treatment in custody.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Arabic, English or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of 'Abd al-Rahman Abu Zaid who is at risk of forcible return to Syria;
- calling on the authorities not to return him to Syria, where he would be in danger of torture;
- reminding the authorities that they are obliged under international law not to forcibly return anyone to a country where they would be at risk of torture.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Interior

Major-General Shaikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan
Ministry of the Interior
PO Box 398
Abu Dhabi
United Arab Emirates

Fax: + 971 2 4414938

Salutation: Your Excellency

Vice-President and Prime Minister

Shaikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum
Office of the Prime Minister
POB 73311
Dubai
United Arab Emirates

Fax: +971 4 330 4000

Salutation: Your Highness

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Shaikh 'Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
PO Box 1
Abu Dhabi
United Arab Emirates

Fax: + 971 4 228 0979

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of the UAE accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 10 July 2008.