

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 24/052/2006

18 August 2006

UA 222/06 Incommunicado detention / fear of torture or ill-treatment

SYRIA 'Ali Sayed al-Shihabi, aged 50, English language teacher

---

'Ali Sayed al-Shihabi has not been seen or heard of since he was summoned to a meeting with State Security agents in the capital Damascus at 10am on 10 August 2006. He is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

On 12 August his wife enquired about him at the State Security centre at Kafr Soussa, Damascus, and was told that he was being held there but that she could not see him. No explanation was given for his summons or continuing detention. She tried a second time to visit him yesterday, 17 August, but again was denied access to him, although security officers did take some personal items from her which they said they would give to him. She was told to make an official application to get permission to see him and to return again in another week.

He has not been charged with any offence, but his arrest may be linked to articles he sometimes writes on political and social issues, particularly via the website *Hiwar al-Mutamedn* ('Civilised Dialogue'). He also has had two books published in Syria on social affairs. 'Ali Sayed al-Shihabi had been summoned many times in the past but had not held for questioning for more than one or two hours. 'Ali Sayed al-Shihabi is a former prisoner of conscience, detained between 1982 and 1991 for his membership of the outlawed Party for Communist Action (PCA). He has since left the party.

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

- expressing concern at the recent arrest of 'Ali Sayed al-Shihabi on 10 August, possibly in connection with articles he had written;
- seeking assurances that 'Ali Sayed al-Shihabi will be well-treated, and not tortured or ill-treated, while in custody;
- reminding the authorities that 'Ali Sayed al-Shihabi has the right to immediate and unrestricted access to his family, a lawyer, and any medical treatment he may need;
- calling on the authorities to charge 'Ali Sayed al-Shihabi with a recognisably criminal offence or to release him immediately, as he appears to be a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful expression of his views.

**APPEALS TO:**

His Excellency Bashar al-Assad

President

Presidential Palace

al-Rashid Street

Damascus

Syrian Arab Republic

**Fax: + 963 11 332 3410**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Minister of Defence

His Excellency General

Hassan Ali Turkmani  
Ministry of Defence  
Omayyad Square  
Damascus  
Syrian Arab Republic  
**Fax: +963 11 223 7842**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Minister of Foreign Affairs  
His Excellency Walid Mu'allim  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
al-Rashid Street  
Damascus  
Syrian Arab Republic  
**Fax: + 963 11 332 7620**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

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 29 September.