

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 24/036/2006

11 May 2006

**Further Information on UA 41/06 (MDE 24/019/2006, 17 February 2006) and follow-ups (MDE 24/020/2006, 21 February 2006; MDE 24/023/2006, 7 March 2006; MDE 24/029/2006, 31 March 2006) - Fear of torture/incommunicado detention/prisoners of conscience and new concern: Unfair trial**

**SYRIA**

'Ali Nizar 'Ali (m), aged 21, student  
Husam 'Ali Mulhim (m), aged 21, student  
Tarek Ghorani (m), student  
Maher Ibrahim (m), aged around 25, shop owner  
'Ayham Saqr (m), aged around 30, works in a beauty salon  
'Alam Fakhour (m), aged around 26  
'Omar 'Ali al-'Abdullah (m), aged around 21, student  
Diab Sirieyeh (m), aged around 26, part-time student

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The men named above were reportedly moved about 11 days ago to Sednaya prison, on the outskirts of Damascus. They have all been held in incommunicado detention since their arrests which took place between 26 January and 18 March 2006. They remain at serious risk of torture and ill-treatment.

'Ali Nizar 'Ali and Husam 'Ali Mulhim were arrested on 26 January; Tarek Ghorani was arrested on 20 February; Maher Ibrahim, Ayham Saqr and 'Alam Fakhour were arrested on 23 February and 'Omar 'Ali al-'Abdullah and Diab Sirieyeh were arrested on 18 March. All the men were arrested and detained by the Air Force Intelligence Branch in the town of Harasta, near Damascus, before being moved to Sednaya prison.

The men's cases have been referred to the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC) although there is no further information on the probable nature of the charges. Requests for legal representation, however, have been refused. Amnesty International has repeatedly raised its concerns about SSSC procedures which fall far short of international standards for fair trial. Defendants do not have the right of appeal, and have restricted access to their lawyers; and "confessions" allegedly extracted under torture are admissible as evidence.

These arrests appear to be connected to the pro-democracy activities of the eight men. They were reportedly involved in developing a political youth movement and writing political articles for various websites. Amnesty International believes they are prisoners of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression and association.

Amnesty International continues to be very concerned at the recent targeting for arrest of members of Syrian civil society including human rights defenders. 'Omar 'Ali al-'Abdullah's father and brother were also arrested on 23 March 2006, again in connection with the peaceful exercising of their right to freedom of expression and are held in Sednaya prison. They are also held in incommunicado detention and have been referred to the SSSC (see UA 73/06, MDE 24/028/2006, 31 March 2006 and updates and AI statement of 3 April 2006 *Syria: New crackdown on government opponents*, MDE 24/031/2006, 3 April 2006).

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

- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all eight men (name them), as they are prisoners of conscience held solely for the peaceful expression of their opinions;
- seeking assurances that each of the eight young men will be well-treated, and not tortured or ill-treated, while they are in custody;

- reminding the authorities that the men have the right to immediate and unrestricted access to their families and lawyers, and any medical treatment they may need;
- reminding the authorities that the proceedings against the eight men before the SSSC must comply with international standards for fair trial;
- urging the authorities to allow people to freely exercise the peaceful expression of their views and reminding them that Article 38 of the Syrian Constitution guarantees freedom of expression for its citizens; and that Article 19 of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Syria is a state party, affirms the right to enjoy freedoms of opinion and expression (Article 19).

**APPEALS TO:**

President

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**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Minister of Defence

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**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Minister of Foreign Affairs

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**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**COPIES 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 June 2006.