

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 24/039/2006

19 May 2006

UA 142/06 Fear of torture/incommunicado detention/prisoners of conscience

SYRIA  
Anwar al-Bunni (m), lawyer and human rights defender  
Nidal Darwish (m), human rights defender  
Michel Kilo (m), writer  
Khalil Hussein (m), former prisoner of conscience  
Mahmoud Mer'i (m), human rights defender  
Dr Safwan Tayfour (m), medical doctor  
Mahmoud 'Issa (m), former prisoner of conscience  
Ghaleb 'Amer (m), human rights defender  
Suleyman Shummar (m)  
Muhammad Mahfouz (m)

---

The 10 Syrian civil society activists named above were arrested between 14 and 18 May by officers of the State Security service. They are held incommunicado, which puts them at risk of torture. At least two of them, Anwar al-Bunni and Nidal Darwish, have been beaten during interrogation.

They were among several hundred Syrian and Lebanese nationals who signed the "Beirut-Damascus Declaration" of 12 May this year, which calls upon their two governments to normalise their relations by exchanging ambassadors and defining their shared borders.

Amnesty International considers them to be prisoners of conscience, detained solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression.

Michel Kilo, a prominent writer and the first to be arrested, was reportedly charged on 17 May with security offences that carry a possible life sentence. On 18 May eight of the other men were taken to court, but not charged, and taken to 'Adra prison, near the capital, Damascus.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Syrian military forces, which had been present in Lebanon for 30 years, completed their withdrawal from the country in April 2005. This was two months after the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri, in which senior Syrian and Lebanese intelligence and security service officers were implicated. Despite the withdrawal, relations between the two countries remain tense. There is no free media in Syria and critics of government policies risk arrest and imprisonment.

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

- calling on the authorities to release the 10 men (naming them) immediately and unconditionally, as they are prisoners of conscience held solely for their peaceful work in promotion of democracy and human rights;
- expressing concern at reports that at least two of the men, Anwar al-Bunni and Nidal Darwish, have been beaten during interrogation and that all 10 are held incommunicado, putting them at grave risk of torture;
- reminding the authorities that the 10 men must be given immediate access to lawyers of their own choosing, their families and any medical attention they may require.

#### **APPEALS TO:**

President

His Excellency Bashar al-Assad  
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**

**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 30 June 2006.