

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 24/049/205

14 July 2005

**Further Information on UA 140/05 (MDE 24/033/2005, 24 May 2005) and follow-ups (MDE 24/043/2005, 30 June 2005; MDE 24/037/2005, 3 June 2005) - Prisoners of conscience/incommunicado detention/fear of torture and ill-treatment/legal concern and new concern: Medical concern**

**SYRIA Muhammad Ra'dun (m), aged 56, lawyer, head of the Arab Organisation for Human Rights-Syria (AOHR-S)  
Nizar Ristnawi (m), founding member of the AOHR-S**

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Muhammad Ra'dun's health is reported to have deteriorated severely since he was detained on 22 May. He reportedly suffers from a chronic inflammation of the windpipe which can cause him to choke in his sleep, and therefore needs to share his cell with someone who can wake him up if he starts to choke. The prison authorities have apparently refused to allow him a cellmate.

While he has been in 'Adra prison he has apparently received some medical treatment for the condition, which causes mucus to build up in the trachea until it prevents him breathing. In the past he has apparently relied on sharing his room with someone who could wake him if he choked. The anxiety of having to sleep alone has caused him great distress and sleep loss. A team of lawyers recently visited him to discuss his forthcoming trial, and found that he had lost around 13kg (28lb). The prison authorities reportedly agreed initially to allow another inmate to share Muhammad Ra'dun's cell, but appear to have returned him to solitary confinement after the Arab Organisation for Human Rights-Syria (AOHR-S) publicised the lawyers' findings about the state of Muhammad Ra'dun's health, and their call for him to be moved to hospital. His wife was allowed to visit him on 11 July, but no one has been allowed to see him since then. It is not known when his trial will begin.

Nizar Ristnawi has reportedly been transferred to Sednaya Prison, on the outskirts of Damascus. He has been detained incommunicado since he was arrested, on 18 April. He remains at grave risk of torture and other ill-treatment. Nizar Ristnawi's case has apparently been referred to the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC), whose standards fall far short of international standards for fair trial. The charges against him are not known. Amnesty International considers him and Muhammad Ra'dun to be prisoners of conscience, held solely for carrying out their peaceful and legitimate work in defence of human rights.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Syrian authorities have recently been systematically harassing human rights defenders and curtailing of their activities. 'Ali al-'Abdullah, a member of both the Committees for the Revival of Civil Society and the Human Rights Association of Syria, was arrested on the night of 15 May because of a statement he read out on 7 May at a discussion group, the Jamal al-Atassi Forum, on behalf of the exiled leader of the banned Muslim Brotherhood. He has been charged by the SSSC with "promoting an illegal organisation". He is now in solitary confinement in 'Adra Prison and his trial is expected to begin on 30 October 2005 (see UA 139/05), MDE 24/032/2005, 25 May 2005 and follow-ups).

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

- urging the authorities to allow Muhammad Ra'dun adequate medical care and attention immediately;
- urging the authorities to release him from solitary confinement and allow him to mix with other detainees;
- calling for the charges against him to be dropped, and reminding the authorities that any proceedings against him must comply with international standards for fair trial;
- seeking assurances that neither he nor Nizar Ristnawi is being tortured or ill-treated;

- expressing concern that Nizar Ristnawi is held incommunicado and reminding the authorities that he and Muhammad Ra'dun should be given regular access to their families and lawyers of their own choosing;
- reminding them that they should allow both men any medical treatment they may require;
- calling on the authorities to release Muhammad Ra'dun and Nizar Ristnawi immediately and unconditionally, as they are prisoners of conscience, detained solely for their peaceful and legitimate human rights work.

**APPEALS TO:**

His Excellency President Bashar al-Assad  
President of the Republic  
Presidential Palace  
Abu Rummaneh, Al-Rashid Street  
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic  
**Fax: + 963 11 332 3410**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

His Excellency General Ghazi Kan'an  
Minister of Interior, Ministry of Interior  
Merjeh Circle  
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic  
**Fax + 963 11 222 3428**  
**Email: mi@net.sy**  
**moi@net.sy**  
**admin@civilaffair-moi.gov.sy**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

His Excellency Muhammad al-Ghafari  
Minister of Justice  
Ministry of Justice  
Al-Nasr Street  
Damascus  
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**Fax: + 963 11 222 3428**  
**Email: moj@net.sy**  
**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 25 August 2005.