

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 248/04 (MDE 24/054/2004, 16 August 2004) - Prisoners of conscience/torture or ill-treatment/medical concern

SYRIA	Haythem Muhammed Yasin al-Hamwi (m), aged 29, university teaching assistant
service	Muhammed Khaled Shehada (m), aged 27, English graduate doing military
	Yahya Taha Sharabajee (m), aged 27, accountant
	Mu'atez Muhammed Zuheyr Murad (m), aged 29, mechanical engineer

The four men named above were released on 2 November.

They were among 190 political prisoners released under a presidential amnesty to mark the Muslim 'Eid holiday. Among the 190 were prisoners of conscience whose unconditional release Amnesty International had been demanding for years, and others sentenced to prison terms after grossly unfair trials.

These four were the last remaining prisoners of conscience from the "Darya group" of jailed community activists; they were among 22 people arrested in May 2003 after they took part in a silent march in the town of Darya, near Damascus, to protest against the US-led invasion of Iraq. Inspired by Islam and by the principle of non-violent direct action, they were involved with a loose network of volunteers from the town who established a free library, actively cleaned up the streets of their town and discouraged bribery and smoking American cigarettes. After a grossly unfair trial before a secret Field Military Court, Muhammed Shehada and Mu'atez Murad were sentenced to three years' imprisonment and Haythem al-Hamwi and Yahya Sharabajee to four years, for "attempting to establish a religious organisation, involvement in unlicensed social activities and attending unlicensed religious and intellectual classes".

No further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.