

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 26/09 (MDE24/001/2009, 30 January 2009) Fear of torture or other ill-treatment/possible prisoner of conscience/health concern

SYRIA Mustafa Jum'ah (m), aged 62, Kurdish political activist

Mustafa Jum'ah, Kurdish political activist and prisoner of conscience, is now being detained at 'Adra prison in the capital, Damascus. He had been kept in incommunicado detention for almost a month following his arrest by Military Intelligence officers on 10 January.

According to sources in Syria, on 8 February Mustafa Jum'ah was transferred to 'Adra prison from the Palestine Branch, an interrogation and detention centre in Damascus which is run by Military Intelligence and is infamous for torture. Reports from Syria suggest that Mustafa Jum'ah was not tortured or otherwise ill-treated while in custody there, but was verbally insulted and intimidated. Mustafa Jum'ah has twice been allowed to meet his family and lawyer, on 10 February and 17 February, but was unable to hold private conversations with them because of the presence of prison guards.

On 10 February, the Public Prosecutor charged Mustafa Jum'ah with "weakening national sentiments" (under Article 285 of the Syrian Penal Code), establishing an "organization with the aim to changing the financial or social status of the state" (Article 306) and "inciting sectarian strife" (Article 307). Mustafa Jum'ah will remain in 'Adra prison until his case is brought before a court. It is believed that Mustafa Jum'ah has been detained because of his peaceful activities as a senior member of a Kurdish political party, the Kurdish Azadi (Freedom) Party in Syria, for which he was carrying out the duties of its exiled leader.

Amnesty International considers that Mustafa Jum'ah is no longer at risk of torture or other ill-treatment. However, the organization will continue to follow the case closely.

Only the ruling Ba'ath Party and parties allied to it are officially allowed to operate in Syria. Supporters of unauthorized opposition parties, human rights defenders and civil society activists are particularly at risk of arbitrary arrest and, in many cases, torture. Two other senior members of the Kurdish Azadi (Freedom) Party in Syria, Sa'dun Sheikhu and Mohammad Sai'd 'Omar, were also transferred to 'Adra prison on 8 February along with Mustafa Jum'ah and were charged with the same offences (under Articles 285, 306 and 307 of the Penal Code) on 10 February after spending around three and a half months in incommunicado detention at the Palestine Branch. See UA 339/08 (MDE 24/036/2008, 11 December 2008).

Thank you to all who sent appeals. No further action is needed.