

URGENT ACTION

SYRIAN KURDISH HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST DETAINED

'Abed al-Hafith 'Abed al-Rahman, a 44-year-old Syrian Kurdish human rights activist, has been held incommunicado since he was detained by members of Military Intelligence on 2 March 2010. He is at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

Military Intelligence officials detained 'Abed al-Hafith 'Abed al-Rahman at his home in the city of Aleppo, north Syria, in the presence of his family. They also seized some of his personal belongings, including a book he had written on teaching the Kurdish language and unpublished statements of the Human Rights Organization in Syria (MAF), an unauthorized non-governmental organization formed by members of the Syrian Kurdish minority.

The Syrian authorities have not revealed the reason for 'Abed al-Hafith 'Abed al-Rahman's detention or whether any charges have been brought against him. He is believed to be held at the Military Intelligence branch in Aleppo. Detainees held by Military Intelligence and security agencies are at risk of torture and other ill-treatment, especially when they are detained incommunicado.

'Abed al-Hafith 'Abed al-Rahman suffers from a skin allergy as well as a stomach ulcer and rheumatism, for which he requires regular medication; he probably does not have access to this medication in detention.

'Abed al-Hafith 'Abed al-Rahman is a member of the Board of Trustees of MAF. Another member of MAF's Board of Trustees, Naderah 'Abdo, was present at the house of 'Abed al-Hafith 'Abed al-Rahman on 2 March and detained at the same time, but she was released uncharged on 6 March, at the Military Intelligence branch in Aleppo.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Arabic, English, French or your own language:

- Expressing concern that 'Abed al-Hafith 'Abed al-Rahman has been detained incommunicado since his arrest on 2 March 2010;
- Urging the authorities to release him immediately and unconditionally unless he is to be charged with a recognizable criminal offence and tried in full conformity with international fair trial standards;
- Calling on the authorities to ensure that he is humanely treated and not subject to torture or other ill-treatment;
- Urging the authorities to allow him immediate access his family, a lawyer of his choice, an appropriate diet and any medical treatment he may require.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 26 APRIL 2010 TO:

President

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 Lieutenant- General Ali
 Ben-Mohammed Habib Mahmoud
 Ministry of Defence
 Omayyad Square
 Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
 Fax : +963 11 2119729

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Minister of Foreign Affairs
 His Excellency Walid al-Mua'llim
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 Abu Rummaneh
 al-Rashid Street
 Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

Fax: +963 11 332 7620

Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
 INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Kurds in Syria suffer discrimination because of their ethnicity; many of them are denied Syrian nationality and therefore do not receive the same access to education, employment, health care and other rights enjoyed by Syrian nationals. In addition, severe restrictions are placed on the use of the Kurdish language and culture in Syria; publishing and printing materials in Kurdish, as well as teaching it, is forbidden and penalized by imprisonment. Kurdish civil society activists and those deemed to be associated with Kurdish political parties or groups who raise concerns about the treatment of Kurds in Syria face the risk of arbitrary arrest, torture and imprisonment after unfair trials. For example, Sheikhu, Mohammad Sa'id 'Omar and Mustafa Jum'ah, all leading members of the Azadi (Freedom) Party, which advocates an end to discrimination against the Kurdish minority, were sentenced on 15 November 2009 to three-year prison terms for "weakening nationalist sentiment" and "inciting sectarian or racial strife or provoking conflict between sects and various members of the nation." The charges apparently arose from their circulation of an Azadi party newspaper which criticized continuing discrimination against Kurds, who are estimated to number between one and a half and two million and to comprise around 10 per cent of Syria's population.

'Abed al-Hafith 'Abed al-Rahman works as an accountant at an Iranian Construction Company. He is the sole bread winner for a family of 13 members.

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