

PUBLIC

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Health Concern / Legal concern

5 October 1998

SYRIA Abd al-Majid Nimer Zaghmout, a Palestinian national, aged 54

There is grave concern for the health of Abd al-Majid Zaghmout, who has been on hunger strike in 'Adra civil prison for 19 days in protest at his continued imprisonment, after an unfair trial, since 1966. He reportedly has heart problems, high blood pressure, severe weight loss and psychological problems.

Abd al-Majid Nimer Zaghmout, a former member of Fatah, a mainstream faction in the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), was arrested at the Yarmuk Palestinian refugee camp in Syria on 10 May 1966 and charged with the politically motivated murder of Palestinian guerrilla leader Yusuf 'Urabi.

Abd al-Majid Nimer Zaghmout denies carrying out the assassination and alleges he was tortured for 46 days following his arrest to force him to admit to the crime, which he refused to do. He was sentenced to death later that year by an exceptional Military Court after a trial that failed to meet international standards for a fair trial. The sentence was never carried out and, despite a ruling by the Minister of Defence, General Mustafa Talas, in 1989, that 'Abd al-Majid Zaghmout be released unless charged with another criminal offence, he remains in detention.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Hundreds of Syrian and non-Syrian political prisoners, including prisoners of conscience, have been detained for years in Syrian jails, many without charge or trial, and others following grossly unfair trials.

Abd al-Majid Nimer Zaghmout, who has now been detained for 32 years, may be the longest serving political prisoner in the Middle East.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Arabic, English, French or your own language:

- expressing grave concern at the deteriorating health of Abd al-Majid Nimer Zaghmout and urging the Syrian government to allow him access to any medical care that he requests;
- urging the Syrian authorities to immediately release Abd al-Majid Nimer Zaghmout, who has been in detention for 32 years following an unfair trial and whose release was ordered nine years ago;
- urging the authorities to review his case and to investigate the reason for his continued detention;
- reminding the government of Syria of its commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Article 8 :*"Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law"*.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency
President Hafez al-Assad
Presidential Palace
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: President al-Assad, Damascus, Syria
Telexes: 419160 prespl sy

Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency
Dr Muhammad Harba
Minster of the Interior
Ministry of the Interior
Merjeh Circle
Damascus
Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: Minister Interior, Damascus, Syria
Faxes: + 963 11 222 3428
Telexes: 411016 AFIRS SY
Salutation: Your excellency

COPIES TO:

His Excellency
Nasser Qaddur
Minister of State for Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Al-Rashid Street
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Faxes: + 963 11 224 5747

and 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 2 November 1998.

"Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law"

Article 8, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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