

**PUBLIC**

**AI Index: MDE 24/018/2006**

**06 February 2006**

**Further Information on UA 223/05 (MDE 24/077/2005, 31 August 2005) and follow-up (MDE 24/106/2005, 5 December 2005) - Fear of torture/Incommunicado detention/health concern/unfair trial/prisoner of conscience**

**SYRIA            Riad Drar al-Hamood (m), aged 51, Arabic language teacher, active member of the unauthorised Committees for Revival of Civil Society**

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Civil society activist Riad Drar al-Hamood, who is facing trial before the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC) on charges of “inciting sectarian strife”, belonging to a “secret organization” and “publishing false news”, has had his case adjourned until 5 March 2006. He was first brought before the court on 4 December 2005. His case has now been adjourned twice.

Riad Drar al-Hamood was arrested on 4 June 2005 after he made a speech at the funeral of the prominent Islamic scholar Sheikh Muhammad Ma’shuq al-Khiznawi, who was abducted in May and died apparently after being tortured (see UA 131/05, MDE 24/027/2005, 19 May 2005 and follow-up). He has been held at ‘Adra prison, near the capital, Damascus since his arrest.

Riad Drar al-Hamood is an active member of the Committees for Revival of Civil Society, an unauthorised network of people engaging in human rights-related and political discussion. Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful expression of his views.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Trials before the SSSC fall far below international fair trial standards. Defendants do not have the right of appeal, and have restricted access to their lawyers; and “confessions” allegedly extracted under torture are admissible as evidence. The UN Human Rights Committee has stated that the SSSC’s procedures are incompatible with the provisions of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights, to which Syria is a state party.

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

- calling on the authorities to release Riad Drar al-Hamood immediately, as he appears to be a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful expression of his views;
- reminding the authorities that the proceedings against Riad Drar al-Hamood before the SSSC must comply with international standards for fair trial.

#### **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**

Acting Minister of Interior  
Ministry of Interior  
Merjeh Circle

Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic  
**Fax** + 963 11 222 3428  
**Salutation:** Your Excellency

His Excellency General Hassan Ali Turkmani  
Minister of Defence  
Ministry of Defence  
Omayyad Square  
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic  
**Fax:** + 963 11 223 7842  
**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 20 March 2006.