

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 24/021/2004

18 March 2004

Further Information on UA 366/02 (MDE 24/053/2002, 18 December 2002) and follow-ups (MDE 24/005/2003, 22 January 2003; MDE 24/012/2003, 31 March 2003) - Incommunicado detention/Fear of torture and ill-treatment/prisoners of conscience

SYRIA	Hassan Saleh (m), aged 60 Marwan 'Uthman (m)	] leading members of the ] Syrian Kurdish <i>Yekiti</i> Party
-------	---	--

---

Prisoners of conscience Hassan Saleh and Marwan 'Uthman were released around the end of February 2004, after sentencing by the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC).

They were convicted on charges relating to "attempting to sever a part of the Syrian territories". The SSSC sentenced the men to three years' imprisonment, then reduced this to 14 months, which time they had already served in prison.

Marwan 'Uthman was reportedly arrested again on 15 March, during mass arrests of Syrian Kurds in the north of the country (see UA 110/04, MDE 24/019/2004, 16 March 2004). He was said to have been released the following day.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has expressed its concerns about the SSSC on a number of occasions. The SSSC's lack of independence and impartiality is compounded by two factors: its verdicts are not subject to appeal, and it is not bound by the rules of the Code of Criminal Procedures. SSSC trials are also unfair because defendants have restricted access to lawyers; judges, especially the President of the Court have been granted wide discretionary powers, and "confessions" allegedly extracted under duress or torture are accepted as evidence.

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