

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: MDE 24/23/92

Distr: UA/SC

UA 269/92

Incommunicado Detention/Fear of Torture

19 August 1992

SYRIA:

Akram Salim Ishti, Lebanese doctor, university lecturer

Dani Mansurati, Lebanese

Rozit 'Isa, female

Marwan Ghazi, manager in publishing

Ahmad Hassu, former medical student

Tammam al-Amin, university student of commerce

'Abd al-Naser Hassu, student at Theatre Institute

Amnesty International has recently received the names of seven political detainees reported to be held incommunicado and to be at risk of torture. They are all reported to have been arrested between January and June 1992 and since then to have been held without trial and possibly without charge. They include two Lebanese nationals and five Syrians.

The two Lebanese are Akram Salim Ishti and Dani Mansurati. Akram Salim Ishti, a 34-year-old doctor and lecturer at the American University in Beirut, is reported to have been arrested in January 1992 by Syrian security forces in Beirut and taken to Damascus. His current whereabouts are unknown. He is said to be detained in order to force one of his brothers to give himself up. The brother is reportedly wanted by the Syrian authorities for his alleged membership of the pro-Iraq wing of the Ba'th Party. Dani Mansurati, aged 32, is reported to have been arrested by members of al-Mukhabarat al-'Askariyya, Military Intelligence, on 9 May while being driven in a friend's car in a Damascus street. He apparently went to Damascus from Lebanon to visit some of his relatives and had been there for two days before his arrest. According to Amnesty International's information he is being held incommunicado at the headquarters of the Air Force Intelligence in Damascus.

Two of the five Syrians, Rozit 'Isa and Marwan Ghazi, are reported to be held in connection with prohibited political organizations and their exact whereabouts are unknown to Amnesty International. Rozit 'Isa is said to have been arrested in February by members of Amn al-Dawla, General Intelligence, on suspicion of having links with the prohibited Party for Communist Action (PCA). She had previously been detained in connection with this party from 1978 to 1980. Her husband, Akram al-Buni, is also detained for alleged membership of the PCA. He has been held without charge or trial since 1987. Marwan Ghazi, a 40-year-old manager in a publishing house, Dar al-'Asimah Publishing House in Damascus, is reported to have been arrested on 9 March in Damascus in connection with the prohibited Nasserist Democratic Popular Organization.

The remaining three of the five Syrians are believed to be held for illegal political activities. Ahmad Hassu, a Syrian Kurd and former medical student aged 34, is said to have been arrested on 17 March by members of al-Amn al-Siyassi, Political Security, in Damascus. He is currently believed to be held in their headquarters in al-Qassa' district in Damascus. According to

Amnesty International's information he was detained for having taken part in a demonstration held on 21 March 1986 on the occasion of the Kurdish new year, Newruz. The authorities had apparently been seeking his arrest since that demonstration. Tammam al-Amin, a 28-year-old student of commerce at the University of Damascus and 'Abd al-Naser Hassu, a fourth-year student at the Theatre Institute and employee of a factory in Damascus, were reported to have been arrested in May or June by members of Amn al-Dawla. They are said to be suspected of having links with the Party for Communist Action (PCA). Their current whereabouts are unknown.

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The systematic use of incommunicado detention has provided a context for torture to be a routine and widespread practice in Syrian prisons and detention centres, and Amnesty International fears that all seven detainees are at risk of torture. In addition, the organization is concerned that they may be held solely for the non-violent expression of their political beliefs and as such would be prisoners of conscience. If this is so they should be released immediately and unconditionally.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes and airmail letters:

- expressing concern at reports that the seven detainees named above are being held incommunicado following their arrest in recent months and that they are at risk of being tortured;
- seeking assurances that they are being treated humanely and are not being subjected to torture or ill-treatment;
- requesting that all detainees be given prompt access to their families and lawyers, and that they be given all necessary medical care;
- asking for their immediate release unless they are to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and given a prompt and fair trial.

APPEALS TO :

1. His Excellency
President Hafez al-Assad
Presidential Palace
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: President al-Assad, Damascus Syria
Telexes: 419160 munjed sy
Salutation: Your Excellency

2. His Excellency Muhammad Harba
Minister of the Interior
Ministry of the Interior
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: Interior Minister, Damascus, Syria
Salutation: Your Excellency

3. His Excellency 'Abdallah Tulba
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Nasr Street
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: Justice Minister, Damascus, Syria
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS 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 30 September 1992.