

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 24/024/2006

14 March 2006

UA 59/06 Fear of torture/incommunicado detention/prisoner of conscience

SYRIA Dr 'Ammar Qurabi (m), human rights defender

Human rights defender Dr 'Ammar Qurabi was arrested on 12 March, on arrival at Damascus airport. He was reportedly arrested by Military Intelligence officers, and is believed to be held in the Military Intelligence Palestine Branch detention centre in the capital, Damascus. He is held incommunicado, putting him in serious danger of torture and other ill-treatment. Amnesty International believes he is held solely for his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights, and considers him a prisoner of conscience.

'Ammar Qurabi is the spokesperson for the unauthorised Arab Organisation for Human Rights – Syria (AOHR-S), which researches and publicises human rights violations by the Syrian authorities. He was returning from a trip to the United States and France when he was arrested. He had reportedly been taking part in meetings of Syrian pro-democracy and human rights activists.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Syrian authorities systematically detain and harass human rights defenders to hamper their activities. Prisoner of conscience Kamal al-Labwani was arrested in November 2005 on his return to Damascus after several months in Europe and the USA. He remains in 'Adra prison (See AI public statement, *Syria: Peaceful activist, Kamal al-Labwani arrested on return to Damascus*, MDE 24/101/2005, 9 November 2005); see also public statement *Syria: Syrian human rights defenders under attack*, MDE 24/092/2005, 21 October 2005).

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

- calling on the authorities to release 'Ammar Qurabi immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience held solely for his peaceful work in defence of human rights;
- expressing concern at reports that he is held incommunicado, putting him at grave risk of torture;
- urging the authorities to ensure that 'Ammar Qurabi is not tortured;
- reminding the authorities that 'Ammar Qurabi must be given immediate access to a lawyer of his own choosing, his family and any medical attention he may require.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency Bashar al-Assad
President
Presidential Palace
al-Rashid Street
Damascus
Syrian Arab Republic

Fax: + 963 11 332 3410

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

His Excellency Walid Mu'allim
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
al-Rashid Street
Damascus
Syrian Arab Republic

Fax: + 963 11 3327620

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 25 April 2006.