

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 59/06 (MDE 24/024/2006, 14 March 2006) Fear of torture/incommunicado detention/prisoner of conscience

SYRIA

Dr 'Ammar Qurabi (m), human rights defender

Dr 'Ammar Qurabi, spokesperson for the Arab Organization for Human Rights – Syria (AOHR-S), was released on 15 March. According to reports, he was released from the Military Intelligence Palestine Branch detention centre in the capital, Damascus. During his detention, he was questioned about his activities in France and the United States.

'Ammar Qurabi was arrested on 12 March 2006 at Damascus airport on his return to Syria from the US and France where he had apparently travelled to participate in meetings of Syrian pro-democracy and human rights activists. Amnesty International believes that he was arrested and detained solely for his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights.

According to reports, 'Ammar Qurabi's case was referred to the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC). However, it is not clear what, if any, charges will be brought against him. Amnesty International continues to have serious concerns about trials before the SSSC whose proceedings fall far short of 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.

Apparently, 'Ammar Qurabi was not ill-treated while in detention. However, he was reportedly told that he would be prevented from travelling outside the country in future. Restrictions on the movement of human rights defenders are regularly imposed by the Syrian authorities. Amnesty International's recent Appeal Case, *Syria: Unable to Move: Freedom of Movement restricted for Human Rights Defenders (and Others)*, (MDE 24/073/2005, 12 August 2005), describes the restrictions placed on people, including being forbidden from leaving the country, being denied passports and, in some cases, being placed under house arrest.

Thanks to all those who sent appeals on this case. No further action is required for the time being. Amnesty International will continue to monitor this case.