

PUBLIC

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UA 224/03

Medical Concern/Prisoner of Conscience

24 July 2003

SYRIA

Mamun al-Humsi (m), aged 47

Prisoner of conscience Mamun al-Humsi was taken to Damascus's Dar al-Shifa hospital on the night of 22-23 July having suffered a heart attack. His health has deteriorated over recent weeks, during which he has also had several hospital treatments for kidney stones.

Mamun al-Humsi is a diabetic and has experienced a severe rise in blood pressure and blood sugar levels during his imprisonment. His medical condition has been exacerbated by the stress of an unfair trial and arbitrary detention.

Prior to his arrest, Mamun al-Humsi had been an independent Member of Parliament (MP) for a Damascus constituency for 11 years. His immunity as an MP was lifted and he was detained on 9 August 2001, two days after beginning a hunger strike in protest at official corruption and the massive powers wielded by the security forces. He was unfairly tried before the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC) on charges of seeking to change the constitution by illegal means. He was jailed for five years in March 2002 and is imprisoned at 'Adra Prison, north of the capital Damascus.

Since his arrest, members of Mamun al-Humsi's family have been harassed, and he himself has been he subject of previous urgent actions. (See UA 205/01, MDE 24/026/2001, 10 August 2001 and follow-ups MDE 24/002/2002, 15 January 2002, and MDE 24/003/2002, 30 January 2002).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Syria has been in an official state of emergency since 1963, during which the authorities have sweeping powers to suppress dissent. Amnesty International considers trials held before the SSSC to be grossly unfair and in April 2001, the Human Rights Committee, the body of experts that monitors implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), expressed concern about the procedures of the SSSC. They stated that the procedures were incompatible with the provisions of the ICCPR, to which Syria is a state party. The Committee stated that "The public nature of proceedings before the [Supreme] State Security Court is not guaranteed. The Committee is also concerned about allegations... that the Court has rejected complaints of torture, even in flagrant cases, and that some legal representatives have withdrawn in protest against the failure to respect the rights of the defence.

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

- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Mamun al-Humsi, as a prisoners of conscience held solely for the peaceful expression of his political opinion;
- expressing concern for the health and safety of Mamun al-Humsi;
- urging the authorities to provide Mamun al-Humsi with any specialist medical treatment he may need;
- calling for him to be allowed continued and unrestricted access to his family.

APPEALS TO:

Excellency President Bashar al-Assad
President of the Republic
Presidential Palace
Abu Rummaneh, Al-Rashid Street

Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

Telegram: **President al-Assad, Damascus, Syria**

Fax: **+ 963 11 332 3410**

Telex: **419160 prespl sy**

Salutation: **Your Excellency**

His Excellency Major General Ali Hammud

Minister of the Interior

Ministry of Interior

Merjeh Circle

Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

Telegram: **Interior Minister, Damascus, Syria**

Fax: **+ 963 11 222 3428**

Telex: **411016 AFIRS SY**

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 4 September 2003.