

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 24/042/2005

29 June 2005

Further Information on UA 142/04 (MDE 24/031/2004, 14 April 2004) and follow-up (MDE 24/036/2004, 23 April 2004, MDE 24/057/2004, 20 August 2004) - Incommunicado detention/fear of torture/"disappearance"/medical concern/unfair trial

SYRIA Aktham Nu'aysa (m), 54, lawyer and human rights defender

Aktham Nu'aysa was acquitted of all charges by the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC) on 26 June 2005. He was released on bail on 16 August 2004 pending his trial, which was attended by several representatives of foreign embassies in Syria.

The SSSC dropped charges of "publishing false news to cause public anxiety" and "opposing the objectives of the revolution" on the basis of insufficient evidence against him. The court decided that another charge of "belonging to an unauthorized organisation" could not proceed as it was covered by an amnesty in 2004. Aktham Nu'aysa faced up to 15 years imprisonment if convicted.

The charges against Aktham Nu'ayse appear to have arisen solely from his legitimate work in defence of human rights. He is a lawyer and head of the Committees for the Defence of Democratic Liberties and Human Rights (CDDLHR).

Aktham Nu'yase did not appear in court on 26 June in protest at the unconstitutional nature of the SSSC whose trials fall far short of international standards for fair trial. The UN Human Rights Committee stated in 2001 that the SSSC's procedures are incompatible with the provisions of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Syria is a state party.

Despite the charges brought against him in 2004, Aktham Nu'ayse has continued his human rights work. In March 2005, he attended the European Parliament's Human Rights Sub-Committee in Brussels where he urged the Committee to "support the emerging democratic forces" in Syria. He is due to receive the Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders in Geneva on 12 October 2005.

Many thanks to all who took action on this case. No further action is required.