

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 24/075/2005

22 August 2005

Further Information on UA 203/05 (MDE 24/056/2005, 03 August 2005) and follow-up (MDE 24/061/2005, 09 August 2005) – Fear of torture/ incommunicado detention/ prisoners of conscience New concern: Legal concern

**SYRIA** Yassin al-Hamwi (m), aged about 60, shopkeeper, founding member of the Committee of the Families of Prisoners of Opinion and Conscience

Muhammad 'Ali al-'Abdullah (m), law student, founding member of the Committee of the Families of Prisoners of Opinion and Conscience

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On 16 August, prisoners of conscience Yassin al-Hamwi and Muhammad 'Ali al-'Abdullah were released on bail, pending their trial before a military court in Damascus on 6 September. The two men are said to be in good health and have thanked Amnesty International for its continuing efforts on their case.

Yassin al-Hamwi and Muhammad 'Ali al-'Abdullah are due to be tried on charges of “establishing a secret society” and “defamation of the public administration”. Trials before military courts are not independent or impartial. In many cases defendants appear to be presumed guilty, and their rights to present a defence and have legal representation are not respected.

Yassin al-Hamwi and Muhammad 'Ali al-'Abdullah are leading members of a newly-established support group, the Committee of the Families of Prisoners of Opinion and Conscience. They were arrested by the security forces on 26 and 27 July respectively, after they took part in the first meeting of this organisation, on 25 July, in the town of Darya, near Damascus. (See public statement MDE 24/055/2005, 27 July 2005, *Syria: Amnesty International concerned at arrests of members of the Committee of the Families of Prisoners of Opinion and Conscience*).

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

- welcoming the news that Yassin al-Hamwi and Muhammad 'Ali al-'Abdullah have been released on bail;
- expressing concern that they are to be tried by a military court, whose proceedings fall far short of international standards for fair trial;
- calling on the authorities to drop charges against both men, as they are on trial solely for having exercised their right to freedom of expression.

**APPEALS TO:**

His Excellency President Bashar al-Assad  
President of the Republic  
Presidential Palace  
Abu Rummaneh, Al-Rashid Street  
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic  
**Fax: + 963 11 332 3410**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

His Excellency General Ghazi Kan'an  
Minister of Interior, Ministry of Interior  
Merjeh Circle  
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic  
**Fax + 963 11 222 3428**  
**Email: admin@civilaffair-moi.gov.sy**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

His Excellency Muhammad al-Ghafari  
Minister of Justice  
Ministry of Justice  
Al-Nasr Street  
Damascus  
Syrian Arab Republic  
**Fax: + 963 11 222 3428**  
**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 3 October 2005.