



To: Health Professional Network
From: Health and Human Rights Team
Date: 9 September 2010

Health Professional Action
Prisoner in need of urgent medical care
Iraq

Oussama Atar, a 26-year-old Belgian national, is in need of urgent medical care at al-Rusafa Prison in Iraq. According to information provided to the Belgian embassy by the prison authorities he has a tumour in the kidney and must undergo an urgent operation in the next two weeks. Reports also indicate that he has lost a great amount of weight and is very ill. Amnesty International fears for his health and is calling on the Iraqi authorities to provide urgently needed medical care.

Oussama Atar has been in prison for the past six years. He was convicted of illegally crossing the border between Syria and Iraq and sentenced to 10 years in prison. He has been held in the prisons of Abu Ghraib, Camp Bucca, Camp Cropper, and he is currently held in al-Rusafa prison in Baghdad. According to his family, his health has deteriorated in the past months. Amnesty International raised concerns about his general state of well-being to the Iraqi authorities in May 2010, but the organisation had received no answer on his behalf. In light of this latest information, Amnesty International fears for his current state of health.

Amnesty International has received reports that the prison contacted the Belgian embassy in Jordan (which has responsibility for Belgium's relations with Iraq) to inform them that Oussama Atar had a tumour in the kidney and that he urgently need to receive treatment in the next two weeks. Amnesty International has also been informed that the Belgian government is reported to have expressed its willingness to provide the necessary treatment for Oussama Atar.

Amnesty International calls on the Iraqi authorities, in particular those responsible for al-Rusafa Prison, to ensure that Oussama Atar receives full and immediate access to the medical care that he needs in conformity with the UN Standard Minimal Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. According the UN Standard Minimal Rules, if adequate medical care is not available in the prison hospital, the prisoner must be transferred for treatment to an appropriate institution outside of the prison system, such as a specialised institution or civil hospital (22.2). Amnesty International is also calling on the prison authorities to cover the costs of such treatment as required by the United Nations Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment (Principle 24). Amnesty International believes the denial of medical care to Oussama Atar may amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

Recommended Action:

Please write to the Iraqi authorities below:

- Explaining that you are a health professional concerned about human rights;

- Expressing concern at reports that Oussama Atar, currently held in al-Rusafa Prison, Iraq, is not receiving adequate medical care;
- Urging the authorities to ensure that Oussama Atar receives full and immediate access to medical care, in accordance with the provisions set out in the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners; if the authorities are unable to urgently provide specialist medical care then they should make arrangements with the Belgian government to guarantee his treatment.

Addresses:

His Excellency

Dr. Salih al Hasnawi

Minister of Health

Convention Centre (Qasr al-Ma'aridh)

Baghdad, Iraq

Salutation: Your Excellency

Her Excellency

Wajdan Mikhail Salam

Minister of Human Rights

Convention Centre (Qasr al-Ma'aridh)

Baghdad, Iraq

Salutation: Your Excellency

Copies to:

His Excellency

Hoshyar Zebari

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Convention Centre (Qasr al-Ma'aridh)

Baghdad, Iraq

Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency

Judge Dara Nouredin

Minister of Justice

Convention Centre (Qasr al-Ma'aridh)

Baghdad, Iraq

Salutation: Your Excellency

Due to the dysfunctional postal system in Iraq, we ask that you direct all appeals to the diplomatic representatives of the Iraqi government accredited to your country. Please mark letters, 'For the attention of the Minister of Health and the Minister for Human Rights, with copies to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Justice.'

If you receive no reply within two weeks of sending your letter, please send a follow-up letter seeking a response. Please send copies of any letters you receive to the International Secretariat, attention of Health and Human Rights Team, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 0DW or e-mail: health@amnesty.org