

IMPRISONED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS SYRIA

Amnesty International is deeply concerned at the continued detention without charge or trial of 90 doctors, dentists and veterinarians who were arrested in 1980 following widespread agitation in Syria for political reforms, including an end to the State of Emergency, in force since 1963. Despite repeated requests for information on those detained, the government has failed to provide information on their whereabouts and well-being.

Background

The main provisions of the Syrian constitution which specify the freedoms of the citizen remain suspended under the terms of Military Order 2 of 17 March 1963 declaring a State of Emergency.

The State of Emergency Law gives the security forces wide powers to arrest and administratively detain anyone suspected of "endangering security and public order". The Martial Law Governor (the Prime Minister), or his deputy, is empowered to delegate to anyone the powers to administratively detain, investigate, or restrict the freedom of persons in respect to meetings, residence, travel and passage. These powers have been delegated to the security forces and in practice have been used in such a way as to result in thousands of arbitrary arrests. The vast majority of political detainees in Syria are held without charge or trial, many for long periods. Families are given no official notification of the arrest, place of detention or subsequent movements of detainees and must obtain such information through their own efforts. Reports of torture and ill-treatment of detainees are common. Such treatment is facilitated by the extensive powers of arbitrary arrest and detention conferred on the security forces which enables them to hold detainees for indefinite periods without any external supervision of their cases.

In 1978 a movement began among the legal profession in Syria to amend legislation to prevent human rights abuses, reinstate the effective role of the judiciary and protect the rights of the individual. A resolution for the implementation of safeguards against human rights abuses was passed by the Syrian Bar Association in June 1978 which called, amongst other things, for the lifting of the State of Emergency.

Support for the initiatives of the Bar Association was forthcoming from within the Syrian medical profession and other professional bodies and in March 1980 joint meetings of the Syrian professional associations were held in several Syrian cities. The meetings were attended by members of the lawyers', medical, dentists', pharmacists, and engineers' associations, and called for political reforms.

On 21 March 1980 a General Conference of the Syrian Medical Association met and voted for a number of demands including the following:

- " . Reaffirmation of the principle of the citizen's rights to freedom of expression, thought and belief;
- . Denunciation of any kind of violence, terror, sabotage and armed demonstration, whatever the reasons and justifications;
- . Abolition of Exceptional Courts . Release or trial of all detainees. "

Ten days later on 31 March 1980, lawyers in Damascus organized a one-day strike in protest at the failure of the authorities to implement the recommendations which were being made. The strike called for an end to the State of Emergency and for reforms in the emergency legislation; for the abolition of state security courts; for a boycott of such courts by all lawyers; and for the release of all untried detainees. It was supported by other branches of the Bar Association and by other professional associations, including members of the Syrian Medical Association, throughout Syria.

Shortly after the strike, on 9 April 1980, the national congresses and regional assemblies of the Medical, Engineers' and Bar Associations were dissolved. In the days that followed numerous members of these professions were arrested without charge.

In 1983 Amnesty International published a major report on Syria, based on a memorandum to the Syrian Government. At the same time a briefer report was issued on the arrests of the professionals; this included a list of some 100 medical professionals, dentists and veterinarians arrested following the March 1980 events. Further information on the cases was issued in 1984.

Since the arrests Amnesty International has learned of the release of only seven of the detained doctors, dentists and veterinarians and of the execution of two doctors in late 1980 and early 1981. Despite repeated calls for information on the whereabouts and fate of the remainder, no response has been provided by the Syrian authorities. Although the Syrian authorities' refusal to provide information prevents Amnesty International from confirming either continued detention or release of the 90 individuals whose names follow, the organization believes that the majority still remain in prison, almost nine years after their arrest.

Amnesty International is once more calling on the Syrian Government to account for the whereabouts of these individuals and is calling for their immediate release unless the government is able to sustain serious criminal charges against any individual.

DOCTORS, DENTISTS AND VETERINARIANS BELIEVED TO BE DETAINED SINCE 1980 IN SYRIA

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Other information</u>
1.	Zahi 'Abbadī	Aleppo	General practitioner (GP)
2.	Muwaffaq 'Abd al-Dayim	Homs	GP, born 1955
3.	Khulud al-'Abdallah	Damascus	--
4.	Tahsin al-'Abdallah	Aleppo	--
5.	Hisham Zain al-'Abidin	Latakiyya	--
6.	Muhammad 'Uthman al-Abrash	--	Dentist, born 1955
7.	Muhammad 'Afissa	Latakiyya	--
8.	'Abd al-Bari al-Akhras	--	--
9.	Mustafa 'Araqil	Idlib	Held in Tadmur prison
10.	Hisham 'Arna'ut	Hama	--
11.	Dr 'Assaf	Hama	--
12.	'Abd al-Qahir al-Atassi	Homs	GP, unmarried
13.	'Abd al-'Aziz 'Attura	Idlib	--
14.	Yasir 'Awni 'Awna	Tartus	GP, born 1953, married. Held in Tadmur prison
15.	Muwaffaq 'Ayyash	Hama	--
16.	Farhan al-Azhari	Homs	Veterinary surgeon, born 1956 unmarried
17.	Muhammad Barad'i	Tartus	GP, held in Tadmur prison
18.	Nimr Barazi	Hama	--
19.	Muhammad As'ad Bisata	Aleppo	--
20.	Muhammad Faiz Bismar	Homs	Gynaecologist
21.	'Abd al-'Aziz Bin 'Abd al-Qadir Bitar	Idlib	Veterinary surgeon, born 1954
22.	'Abd al-Majid Bin 'Abd al-Qadir Bitar	Idlib	Veterinary surgeon, born 1952
23.	Ahmad al-Bushi	Aleppo	--
24.	Ahmad Dalati	Homs	Was studying ophthalmology at

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Other information</u>
		time of arrest. Held in Tadmur.
25. Muhammad Nizar al-Daqr	Damascus	Professor of dermatology. Married. Held in Tadmur.
26. 'Abd al-Hamid Diab	Homs	GP
27. Ibrahim Faris	Latakiyya	Paediatrician, born 1950. Married with three children
28. Mustafa Farji	Aleppo	--
29. Fu'ad Fi'awi	Hama	--
30. 'Abd al-Majid Ghaza'l	Aleppo	--
31. Muhammad 'Ali Ghaza'l	Aleppo	--
32. Ghassan Mustafa al-Haj	Idlib	--
33. Muhammad Halima	Tartus	GP
34. Usama al-Hashimi	Aleppo	Dentist, unmarried
35. Ahmad Hazifa	Tartus	--
36. Rafiq Ibrahim Ibrahim	Hama	GP
37. Marwan al-Idlibi	Damascus	--
38. Radwan 'Iqrin	Aleppo	--
39. Jalal Jalaghi	Hama	
40. Darwish Janu	Damascus	GP, born 1955
41. Husain Jarrah	Aleppo	--
42. Nadim Jawda	Aleppo	--
43. Mahmud al-Jaziri	Damascus	Professor of Surgery, Medicine Faculty, Damascus University
44. Mahmud Kassab	Homs	Surgeon
45. Salih al-Khoja	Damascus	--
46. Adib Kirdawi	Hama	--
47. 'Abd al-Rahman Kittanji	Aleppo	--
48. Kamal Koba Dar	Aleppo	--
49. Walid Ma'mar	Idlib	--

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Other information</u>
50.	Hassan al-Mufti	Latakiyya	Gynaecologist, born 1954, married, one child
51.	Naji Muhabek	Aleppo	--
52.	Qasim Musa	Latakiyya	Ear, nose, throat specialist, born 1948, married, 3 children
53.	Hassan Najjar	Aleppo	--
54.	Munib Zahri al-Najjar	Homs	Veterinary surgeon
55.	Muhammad Nino	Idlib	GP
56.	Muhammad Mukhlis Qannut	Hama	Surgeon, born 1955, unmarried
57.	Ahmad Qaraquz	Homs	GP, born 1956, married
58.	'Ayisha Qutaish	Aleppo	GP (female)
59.	'Arfan Rashidqi	Aleppo	--
60.	Muhammad Mansur al-Rifa'i	Homs	Ear, nose, throat specialist. Unmarried
61.	Muhammad 'Akif Rustum	Latakiyya	Paediatrician, born 1950, married, three children
62.	Hassan Sa'id	Aleppo	GP
63.	Badr al-Din al-Safadi	Damascus	--
64.	Bashir Saifu	Damascus	--
65.	'Abd al-'Aziz al-Salih	Deir al-Zor	--
66.	Taisir Samsam	Hama	--
67.	Muhammad Zakariyya Saqqa'l	Aleppo	--
68.	'Abd al-'Aziz 'Abd al-	Idlib	-- Qadir Sawwan
69.	Riad 'Abd al-Qadir Sawwan	Idlib	--
70.	Sa'id Shakir	Latakiyya	--
71.	'Abd al-Qadir Shallat	Idlib	--
72.	Fawwaz Ahmad Sharbak	Homs	Ear, nose, throat specialist. Married.
73.	Jamal Shuman	Latakiyya	GP, born 1957, married.
74.	Muhammad Nasir al-Siba'i	Homs	Anaesthetist, born 1945, married, three children
75.	Fadil Sirajiyya	Aleppo	Ophthalmologist
76.	Khadr al-Sutari	Homs	--
77.	Muhammad Dib Tahmaz	Hama	GP, born 1945
78.	Fawwaz Taqi al-Din	Homs	Veterinary surgeon, unmarried.

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Other information</u>
79.	'Abd al-Rahman Tutu	Idlib	Born 1953, married.
80.	'Abd al-Ra'uf 'Ubaid	Idlib	Professor of Neurology
81.	Qaddur 'Ubaidan	Idlib	GP, born 1940, married, five children.
82.	Usama 'Urfali	Latakiyya	GP
83.	'Abd al-Salam 'Uthman	Tartus	Dentist, born 1949, married.
84.	Husam 'Uthman	Tartus	--
85.	Mustafa 'Uthman	Tartus	Surgeon, married.
86.	'Adil 'Uthmani	Latakiyya	Dentist
87.	Majid 'Uthmani	Latakiyya	--
88.	'Abd al-Fattah al-Wadi	Homs	--
89.	'Abd al-Latif Yunusu	Idlib	Veterinary surgeon. Born 1942, Married, seven children.
90.	Sa'id Zaidan	Idlib	GP, born 1956, unmarried.

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Note:

The list published in 1983 included the names of Drs Ahmad Faiz al-Fawwaz and Tawfiq Draq al-Siba'i. They do not appear on the current list as Amnesty International has since learned that their arrests were motivated by reasons other than the apparently indiscriminate arrests of professionals after the March 1980 strike. Dr Draq al-Siba'i was detained in Homs in May 1980 after the Syrian censors intercepted a letter from his relatives in Saudi Arabia expressing concern about the political situation in Syria. He is accused of involvement in matters affecting state security. In 1987 Amnesty International learned that Dr Draq al-Siba'i was being held in al-Mezze Military Prison, Damascus. There had been earlier speculation that he may have died in a massacre in Tadmur prison carried out by Syrian troops in 1980. Dr Faiz al-Fawwaz was arrested for membership of the prohibited Communist Party Political Bureau. He is currently detained in 'Adra Civil Prison.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Other information</u>
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To : Medical professionals
 From: Medical Office / Research Department - Middle East
 Date: 5 April 1989

MEDICAL LETTER-WRITING ACTION

**Imprisoned Health Professionals
 SYRIA**

Medical groups participated in an action on Syria starting November 1983 focussing on some 100 medical, dental and veterinary professionals who had been arrested in 1980. Since the arrests AI has learned that seven of those professionals have been released and two executed. AI has received little further information on the remainder and is seeking a major effort to secure their release. Please see the external details attached.

Groups are asked to encourage letters from a wide range of health professionals to the government addresses given below:

- expressing deep concern about the continuing detention of doctors arrested in 1980 following a one-day strike supported by professional associations on 31 March; you could refer to reports that more than 90 doctors are still being held without charge or trial almost nine years after arrest
- seeking information about the whereabouts and living conditions of doctors remaining in prison
- asking for a list of doctors currently imprisoned together with information on the crimes they are alleged to have committed
- urging that these doctors be released after nine years in untried detention

ADDRESSES

His Excellency
 President Hafez al-Assad
 Presidential Palace
 Damascus
 Syrian Arab Republic

His Excellency Mahmud al-Zu'bi
 Prime Minister
 Office of the Prime Minister
 'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar Street
 Damascus
 Syrian Arab Republic

His Excellency Dr Iyad al-Shatti
 Minister of Health

His Excellency Muhammad Harba
 Minister of the Interior

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Other information</u>
al-Majlis al-Niyabi Street Damascus Syrian Arab Republic		Ministry of the Interior Damascus Syrian Arab Republic

Letters should also be sent to the Syrian diplomatic representative in your country with a copy of the names attached to this action

- expressing concern at the reported prolonged imprisonment without charge or trial of a large number of health professionals in Syria
- asking for the help of the diplomatic representative in clarifying the situation of those named (you should send a copy of the names given in this action)
- urging that the Syrian authorities release them immediately insofar as they have not been brought before a court of law, have not been given a fair trial, and no evidence has been produced of involvement in any recognizably criminal activities

Groups should also inform their medical, dental and veterinary associations concerning the named prisoners. You could write a brief letter emphasising that the prisoners have been held for nearly nine years without charge or trial. Urge the association to do whatever they can to help the prisoners to obtain freedom. (If you have not previously contacted the dental or veterinary associations, you should explain the mandate of AI and the work of the medical group before asking for their help.)

Letters may be sent to the Syrian Medical Association asking them whether they can provide any information on the individuals named

Dr M. Sherif Bakle
Ordre des Médecins Syriens
Place de l'Etoile
Damascus
Syrian Arab Republic

In addition, groups should try to get publicity on these detentions in the medical press. The Section press officer may be contacted about the possibility of press elsewhere.

If your group receives any replies or has any letters or articles published please send copies to the IS (Medical Office).