

15 January 2002

Further information on UA 205/01 (MDE 24/026/2001, 10 August 2001) - Prisoner of Conscience/Fear of torture/Legal concern**SYRIA** Mamun al-Humsi (m), aged 45, member of parliament**New names:** Riad Sairafi (m), 30
Ahmad Sairafi (m), 23
Jamal al-Masri (m), 40

The three relatives of Mamun al-Humsi named above were arrested on 26 December, after they applauded him at the latest hearing of his trial, at the Damascus Criminal Court. They are now held in 'Adra Prison, where Mamun al-Humsi is held, apparently without access to lawyers or their family, and may be at risk of torture or ill-treatment. Amnesty International considers all three to be prisoners of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful expression of their opinions.

Member of parliament Mamun al-Humsi was arrested on 9 August. He was put on trial before the Criminal Court in Damascus on 30 October, charged with offences including "attempting to change the constitution by illegal means".

On 26 December Mamun al-Humsi's lawyers reportedly reaffirmed request for 20 defence witnesses to be called to testify, including other MPs, political analysts and writers, as well as the former minister of interior, Muhammad Harba. The judge rejected the request on the grounds that the testimony would be "unnecessary and counter-productive". Mamun al-Humsi reportedly shouted angrily and defied the judge's order to keep silent. His nephews Riad Sairafi and Ahmad Sairafi, and his brother-in-law Jamal al-Masri, applauded, and continued shouting in al-Humsi's support after they had left the court building. They were arrested in the street by members of the military intelligence, accused of provoking "public disorder". Until now they have not been brought officially before a judge for interrogation.

Other relatives of Mamun al-Humsi are also reportedly being harassed and intimidated by the Syrian authorities.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Mamun al-Humsi is one of several prominent opposition figures now on trial before the Criminal and State Security Courts. Among them is another independent member of parliament, Riad Seif (see UA 226/01, MDE 24/029/01, 7 September 2001, and follow-ups).

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

- calling for Riad Sairafi, Ahmad Sairafi and Jamal al-Masri to be released immediately and unconditionally, as Amnesty International considers them prisoners of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful expression of their political opinions;
- seeking assurances that they are being well treated in custody and not tortured or ill-treated;
- urging the authorities to ensure that they are allowed immediate access to their families, lawyers and any medical care they may need;

- expressing concern at reports that other relatives of al-Humsi are being harassed by the authorities.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency
President Bashar al-Assad
Presidential Palace
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: President al-Assad, Damascus, Syria
Telexes: 419160 prespl sy
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency
Nabil al-Khatib
Ministry of Justice
Al-Nasr Street
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: Justice Minister, Damascus, Syria
Fax: + 963 11 224 6250
e-mail: moj@net.sy
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency
Maj-Gen Ali Hammud
Minister of the Interior
Ministry of the Interior
Merjeh Circle
Damascus
Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: Interior Minister, Damascus, Syria
Faxes: + 963 11 222 3428
Telexes: 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 26 February 2002