

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 24/07/91  
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Date: 15 October 1991

*MEDICAL CONCERN*

@ Dr Mahmud al-'Aryan, Dr Khalid al-Nasser  
'Adil Sahyuni, Bara al-Sarraaj

£SYRIA

Amnesty International is concerned for the four prisoners named here who are held in Syria in long-term detention without trial. Bara al-Sarraaj has been held for seven years, Mahmud al-'Aryan and Khalid al-Nasser for five years, and 'Adil Sahyuni for four years. Amnesty International believes they may be prisoners of conscience. All four are reported to be in ill-health and in need of medical care. Little information is generally available on the nature of their problems, but Amnesty International has received reports that they are without access to adequate medical attention.

All political groups which are not part of the official National Progressive Front (formed in 1972) are banned in Syria. Thousands of suspected opponents of the government are detained under state of emergency legislation in force in Syria since 1963 and most are detained without charge or trial. Some have been held for over 20 years. Hundreds of detainees are prisoners of conscience and many are reported to have been ill-treated or tortured. The following is the information currently available on the four prisoners named above.

**Dr Khalid al-Nasser**

Dr Khalid al-Nasser is a nephrologist aged around 44. He was arrested in September 1986 in Aleppo and is believed to be held in connection with the Popular Democratic Nasserist Organization (*al-Tanzim al-Sha'bi al-Dimuqrati al-Nasiri*) which is prohibited in Syria. Dr al-Nasser is reported to be held without trial in Muslmiyya prison in Aleppo and is said to be suffering from suspected kidney problems. He is married with two children.

**Dr Mahmud al-'Aryan**

Dr Mahmud al-'Aryan is a 43-year-old gynaecologist who was arrested in September 1986 in connection with the banned Popular Democratic Nasserist Organization. He has been held since his arrest without trial and is currently reported to be held in 'Adra Civil Prison near Damascus. Information has recently been received that Dr al-'Aryan is in very poor health and

requires medical care and attention. No further details are at present available. He is married with two children.

### **'Adil Sahyuni**

'Adil Sahyuni is aged approximately 48 and is married with two children. At the time of arrest he was an employee at the Justice Palace in Aleppo. He was arrested in July 1987 in connection with the banned Arab Socialist Union Party in Syria (*Hizbu al-Itihad al-Ashtiraqi al-Arabi fi Suriya*). He is reported to be held in 'Adra Civil Prison without trial. 'Adil Sahyuni is reported to suffer from cardiac problems but to be without access to regular medical attention.

### **Bara al-Sarraj**

Bara al-Sarraj is aged 28, single, and has been detained without trial for seven years. Although the reasons for his arrest have not been made clear, it is believed that he may be detained solely because of family connections. He is the nephew of 'Adnan Sa'd al-Din, a leading figure in the Muslim Brotherhood movement (*al-Ikhwān al-Muslimān*) in Syria who is in exile. There have been numerous instances in Syria of individuals being arrested and held in lieu of relatives sought by the authorities.

Bara al-Sarraj was a student of engineering at the time of his arrest on 5 March 1984. He was arrested while attending university lectures and taken from the main lecture hall of Damascus University's Faculty of Engineering by members of the Military Intelligence (*al-Mukhabarat al-'Askarigga*). He was held in a detention centre in Damascus run by the Military Intelligence for a short period, then moved to a prison in Hama and later to Tadmur Prison where he is currently believed to be detained. Bara al-Sarraj suffers from kyphoscoliosis which causes him respiratory difficulties and is said to have little opportunity to exercise.

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Amnesty International is seeking guarantees from the Syrian government that proper medical care and attention will be provided to these detainees without delay. It is further calling on the government to provide justification for their continued detention and is urging that they be released without further delay if they are not charged with a recognizably criminal offence and given a prompt and fair trial.

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AI Index: MDE 24/07/91  
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To: Medical professionals  
From: Medical Office / Research Department - Middle East  
Date: 15 October 1991

*MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION*

**Dr Mahmud al-'Aryan, Dr Khalid al-Nasser  
'Adil Sahyuni, Bara al-Sarraaj**

**SYRIA**

**Keywords**

Theme: long-term detention without trial/ill-health/medical care

Profession/association: doctors

**Summary**

Amnesty International is concerned for the four prisoners named above who have been held for periods of between four and seven years without trial. All are said to be in need of medical attention.

**Recommended Actions**

Letters are requested from medical professionals to the Syrian authorities listed below

- calling attention to the cases of Dr Mahmud al-'Aryan, Dr Khalid al-Nasser, 'Adil Sahyuni and Bara al-Sarraaj all of whom are detained without trial and are said to be in need of medical attention
- seeking assurances that they will be provided with proper medical attention and treatment without further delay
- expressing serious concern that they are being detained without trial
- seeking information on the justification for their continued detention and urging that unless they are charged with recognizably criminal offences and given a prompt and fair trial, they should be released without delay

Letters may also make enquiries about the health care facilities available in the places of detention where the four are held, expressing concern at frequent reports of the lack of adequate medical attention available to detainees. Letters to the Minister of Health, in particular (and copies to the Medical Association), could raise the issue of health care in prisons. Letters could cite Principle 1 of the United Nations *Principles of Medical Ethics*<sup>1</sup> which states:

"Health personnel, particularly physicians, charged with the medical care of prisoners and detainees have a duty to provide them with protection of their physical and mental health and treatment of disease of the same quality and standard afforded to those who are not imprisoned or detained."

Reference could also be made to the UN Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment, adopted on 9 December 1988, Article 24 of which states:

"A proper medical examination shall be offered to a detained or imprisoned person as promptly as possible after his admission to the place of detention or imprisonment, and thereafter medical care and treatment shall be provided whenever necessary. This care and treatment shall be provided free of charge."

### Addresses

His Excellency  
President Hafez al-Assad  
Presidential Palace  
Damascus  
Syrian Arab Republic  
**Telegrams: President al-Assad,  
Damascus, Syria**  
**Telexes: PRESPL 419160 sy**

His Excellency 'Abd al-Halim Khaddam  
Vice-President  
Office of the President  
Presidential Palace  
Damascus  
Syrian Arab Republic  
**Telegrams: Vice-President Khaddam,  
Damascus, Syria**  
**Telexes: PRESPL 41960 sy**

His Excellency Khaled al-Ansari  
Minister of Justice  
Ministry of Justice  
Nasr Street  
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic  
**Telegrams: Justice Minister,  
Damascus, Syria**

His Excellency Muhammad Harba  
Minister of the Interior  
Merjeh Circle  
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic  
**Telegrams: Interior Minister,  
Damascus, Syria**

His Excellency Dr Iyad al-Shatti  
Minister of Health  
Ministry of Health  
al-Majlis al-Niyabi Street

**Telegrams: Health Minister, Damascus, Syria**  
**Telexes: HEALTH 412655, sy**

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<sup>1</sup>United Nations' Principles of Medical Ethics relevant to the role of health personnel, particularly physicians, in the protection of prisoners and detainees against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of punishment. Adopted 18 December 1982.

Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

**Copies to:**

Maître Hassan Hamdan  
President  
Syrian Bar Association  
Rue Mayssaloun  
Damascus  
Syrian Arab Republic

Dr M. Cherif Bakle  
Ordre des médecins syriens  
Place de l'Etoile  
Damascus  
Syrian Arab Republic

**and to diplomatic representatives of Syria in your own country**