

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 24/007/2009

30 March 2009

UA 90/09 Fear of torture or other ill-treatment/incommunicado detention

SYRIA Maryam Kallis (f), aged 36, UK national

UK national Maryam Kallis has been detained incommunicado in an unknown location since 15 March. She is in danger of torture and other ill-treatment. She has not been allowed access to legal counsel or visits from her family.

Maryam Kallis had been in Syria since 5 March, staying with her sister. She had her three children with her, who are between five and eight years old. On 15 March, she was arrested while she was with her eight-year-old son by a group of eight or 10 men in civilian clothes in the Rukna al-Din area of the capital, Damascus. The men took Maryam Kallis and her son back to her sister's apartment, where they confiscated her passport and those of her children, before handcuffing Maryam and taking her away.

She had travelled to Damascus with her family in October 2002, to study Arabic. She went back to the UK in late 2008, and returned to Damascus in March 2009 to collect her children and bring them back to the UK. She was due to return to London at the end of March.

The UK authorities have contacted the Syrian authorities to ask where Maryam Kallis is and why she has been arrested, but have not been provided with any information.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Torture is widespread in Syrian detention and investigation centres, and detainees are in particular danger if they are taken into incommunicado detention. "Confessions" extracted under duress are **routinely** used as "evidence" in Syrian courts, and the defendants' claims that they have been tortured are almost never investigated. During 2008 seven people died in custody, **apparently as a result of torture or other ill-treatment**. The authorities generally take no action to investigate torture allegations.

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

- expressing concern that British national Maryam Kallis was detained on 15 March, and is now held incommunicado and **in secret**, and asking where she is;
- urging the authorities to ensure that Maryam Kallis is not tortured;
- calling on them to release Maryam Kallis immediately and unconditionally unless she is charged with a recognizably criminal offence and given a prompt and fair trial;
- reminding the authorities that Maryam Kallis must be given immediate access to a lawyer of her own choosing, her family and any medical treatment she may require.

APPEALS TO:

President
His Excellency Bashar al-Assad
Presidential Palace
Al-Rashid Street

Damascus
Syrian Arab Republic
Fax: + 963 11 332 3410
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Interior
His Excellency Major General Bassam Abdel Majid
Ministry of Interior
'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar Street
Damascus
Syrian Arab Republic
Fax: +963 11 2223428
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Defence
His Excellency General Hassan Ali Turkmani
Ministry of Defence
Omayyad Square
Damascus
Syrian Arab Republic
Fax: +963 11 223 7842
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice
His Excellency Muhammad al-Ghafari
Ministry of Justice
Al-Nasr Street
Damascus
Syrian Arab Republic
Fax: +963 11 666 2460
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 11 May 2009.