

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 24/009/2009

9 April 2009

Further information on UA 90/09 (MDE 24/007/2009, 30 March 2009) Fear of torture or other ill-treatment/incommunicado detention

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

Maryam Kallis was visited by the British Consul in Damascus and two of his colleagues on 8 April, in the presence of the Syrian authorities. Although she has been held since 15 March at an undisclosed location, no charges have been brought against her and the reason for her detention has not been made public.

Concerns for Maryam Kallis' safety are increased by the fact that other than the visit from the British Consul, she has been held in incommunicado detention, where detainees are at increased risk of being tortured or ill treated. She continues to be denied access to her family or legal representation and it is not known if or when she will be granted another visit by the Consul.

Maryam Kallis suffers from claustrophobia and is very susceptible to panic attacks when either in enclosed or strange and unfamiliar places. The Syrian authorities informed consular staff that she has been treated by a doctor during detention, but Amnesty International has no information about the reasons for her treatment. The authorities have apparently agreed for staff from the British Embassy in the capital, Damascus, to arrange for Maryam Kallis to receive a change of clothes and food from her family.

Maryam Kallis had arrived in Syria from the UK on 5 March and had been staying with her sister. She had returned to collect her three children who had been staying in Damascus with her sister and who are aged between five and eight years old. She intended to return with them to London at the end of March. On 15 March, however, she was arrested by a group of eight or 10 men in civilian clothes in the Rukna al-Din area of Damascus. At the time, Maryam Kallis was with her eight-year-old son with whom she was taken back to her sister's apartment, where her passport and those of her children were confiscated, before she was taken away.

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

- welcoming the news that Maryam Kallis has been given access to the British Consul and urging that she be permitted regular visits from UK officials in Damascus but asking that she also be given access to her family and to a lawyer of her choosing;
- urging them to continue to allow her any medical treatment she may require;
- calling on them to release Maryam Kallis immediately and unconditionally unless she is to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and given a prompt and fair trial;
- calling on the Syrian authorities to disclose the whereabouts of Maryam Kallis' detention as a matter of urgency;
- urging the authorities to ensure that Maryam Kallis is not tortured or otherwise ill-treated.

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
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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 21 May 2009.