

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 24/018/2004

12 March 2004

UA 107/04 Possible prisoners of conscience / Fear of torture or ill-treatment

SYRIA  
Fahim Hassan Yusuf (m)  
Jomard Fahim Yusuf (m), his son  
Hussain Muhammad Murad (m)  
Akram Muhammad Murad (m)  
Hassan Muhammad Murad (m)  
Khader Nawar Manja (m)  
Zeres Nawar Manja (m)

---

The seven Syrian Kurdish men named above were reportedly arrested at their homes in the early hours of 9 March 2004. Their whereabouts are not known but it is believed they may be held in the custody of Political Security in the northern city of al-Hassaka. Amnesty International is concerned that these men are held incommunicado and are at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

The arrests apparently followed Kurdish demonstrations in the northern cities of Qamishli and al-Hassaka (both Kurdish areas) on 8 March to mark International Women's Day. The activities included the playing of Kurdish folk music concerning Kurdish heritage. Amnesty International believes these men may be prisoners of conscience, arrested solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Syrian Kurdish political detainees are routinely tortured and ill-treated while held incommunicado in Syrian prisons and detention centres.

The Syrian authorities impose severe restrictions on the production and circulation of Kurdish literature, including books and music. They have arrested and detained Syrian Kurds without charge for their involvement in the organization of Kurdish cultural activities, including the Kurdish *Nawruz* (New Year) celebrations.

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

- calling for Fahim Hassan Yusuf, Jomard Fahim Yusuf, Hussain Muhammad Murad, Akram Muhammad Murad, Hassan Muhammad Murad, Khader Nawar Manja and Zeres Nawar Manja to be released immediately and unconditionally, as they were apparently detained solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly;
- seeking assurances that they are not being tortured or otherwise ill-treated;
- urging that they be allowed immediate and unrestricted access to their families, lawyers and any medical care that they may need;
- urging the authorities to ensure that the right to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly is guaranteed in Syria, in accordance with international human rights standards such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (see Articles 18, 19, 21, 22) to which Syria is a state party.

#### **APPEALS TO:**

His Excellency Bashar al-Assad  
President  
Presidential Palace  
Abu Rummaneh  
al-Rashid Street

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

His Excellency Major General 'Ali Hammud  
Minister of the Interior  
Ministry of Interior  
Merjeh Circle  
Damascus  
Syrian Arab Republic  
**Fax: + 963 11 222 3428**  
**Telegrams: Interior Minister, Damascus, Syria**  
**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 23 April 2004.