

UA 240/99

Legal concern/Health concern/Fear of torture

14 September

**SYRIA 'Abdalla Ahmad Muhammad, 71**

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'Abdallah Ahmad Muhammad, a 71-year old Iraqi Kurd believed to have been travelling on a Swedish passport, was reportedly arrested on 22 August 1999 on his arrival from Sweden. He has since been detained incommunicado, and Amnesty International fears that he may be tortured and ill-treated. He suffers from chronic heart and kidney problems, and needs regular medication.

After his arrest by Syrian security forces at Damascus airport he was apparently taken to Far' Falastin (Palestine Branch) detention centre in Damascus. His wife and son, who had travelled with him, were allowed to continue their journey to Iraqi Kurdistan.

'Abdallah Ahmad Muhammad has previously suffered three heart attacks and has only one kidney. It is feared that he may be lacking medication and is being denied access to his family and a doctor. He is reportedly no longer involved in any political activity, though he had previously been active in the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), one of the main Kurdish organizations and controls part of Iraqi Kurdistan.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Hundreds of political detainees belonging to unauthorized political groups are currently held in Syrian prisons, some serving sentences of up to 22 years handed down by the Syrian Supreme State Security Court after grossly unfair trials. Torture and ill-treatment of detainees, especially during the interrogation stage, is routine. Amnesty International has a list of detainees who have died in custody reportedly as a result of torture and/or grossly inadequate medical care.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English, Arabic, French or your own language:**

- expressing concern at the incommunicado detention of 'Abdallah Ahmad Muhammad and calling for his immediate release unless he is charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- urging that he be allowed immediate access to adequate medical care and the medication he needs, and to his family and a lawyer;
- seeking assurances that 'Abdallah Ahmad Muhammad is being humanely treated and not tortured or ill-treated.

**APPEALS TO:**

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

His Excellency, Dr Muhammad Harba  
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:**

His Excellency, Nasser Qaddur  
Minister of State for Foreign Affairs  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Al-Rashid Street, Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic  
**Telegrams: Nasser Qaddur, Damascus, Syria**  
**Faxes: + 963 11 331 0134**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

and 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 October 1999.