

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 24/066/2006

27 October 2006

Further Information on UA 142/06 (MDE 24/039/2006, 19 May 2006) and follow-ups (MDE 24/040/2006, 31 May 2006; MDE 24/051/2006, 24 July 2006; MDE 24/057/2006, 2 October 2006); MDE 24/065/2006, 25 October - Fear of torture/incommunicado detention/prisoners of conscience/unfair trial

SYRIA **Anwar al-Bunni (m) lawyer and human rights defender
Michel Kilo (formerly written as Michele) (m) writer
Mahmoud 'Issa (m), former prisoner of conscience**

At risk of re-arrest: **Khalil Hussein (m) former prisoner of conscience
Suleyman Shummar (m)**

Mahmoud 'Issa is reportedly being held in 'Adra prison near Damascus, following his arrest on 23 October 2006. His whereabouts were unknown until 25 October.

Khalil Hussein and Suleyman Shummar are at risk of imminent arrest.

Mahmoud 'Issa, Khalil Hussein and Suleyman Shummar were released from detention on bail on 25 September after they were arrested in connection with signing the Beirut-Damascus Declaration, which called for normalisation of diplomatic relations between Syria and Lebanon. Charges, apparently connected with their exercising the right to freedom of expression, were brought against them by the Investigating Judge on 19 October.

Michel Kilo and Anwar al-Bunni have been detained for over five months, also in connection with signing the Declaration. They are being held in 'Adra prison. Amnesty International believes that Michel Kilo, Anwar al-Bunni and Mahmoud 'Issa are prisoners of conscience, held solely for their work in support of democratic rights.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Anwar al-Bunni, Michel Kilo and Mahmoud 'Issa have been subjected to persistent harassment by the Syrian authorities over the years as a result of their work in support of democratic rights. They are part of a group of at least 10 Syrian civil society activists arrested by State Security service officers between 14 and 18 May 2006. They were among several hundred Syrian and Lebanese nationals who signed the Beirut-Damascus Declaration. Despite Syria's withdrawal of troops from Lebanon in April 2005, following the assassination two months earlier of the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri, in which senior Syrian and Lebanese intelligence and security service officers were implicated, relations between the two countries remain tense.

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

- calling for all charges against Anwar al-Bunni, Michel Kilo, Mahmoud 'Issa, Khalil Hussein and Suleyman Shummar to be dropped since they appear to be a consequence of their exercising their right to express their beliefs;
- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Anwar al-Bunni, Michel Kilo and Mahmoud 'Issa as they are being held as prisoners of conscience;
- reminding them that, if brought to trial, each of the five men must be given a fair hearing in accordance with international standards for fair trial including the right to a hearing by an "independent and impartial tribunal" in accordance with the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to which Syria is a state party;

- seeking assurances that the three men will be well-treated, and not tortured or ill-treated, while in custody;
- urging them to implement measures laid out in the UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms Declaration, which allow for "the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels".

APPEALS TO:

(Please note that it may be difficult to get through to the fax numbers; please keep trying)

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 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

Minister of Foreign Affairs

His Excellency Walid Mu'allim
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
al-Rashid Street
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Fax: + 963 11 332 7620
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 8 December 2006.