

PUBLIC

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Fear of torture or other ill-treatment/possible prisoner of conscience/health concern

SYRIA

Mustafa Jum'ah (m), aged 62, Kurdish political activist

Kurdish political activist Mustafa Jum'ah has been held in incommunicado detention since his arrest by Military Intelligence officers on 10 January. He is believed to be still in the custody of Military Intelligence, possibly, according to some reports, at the Far' Falastin interrogation and detention centre in Damascus. Far' Falastin is notorious for torture and Mustafa Jum'ah is at serious risk.

Amnesty International believes Mustafa Jum'ah may be a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and association. He is believed to have been detained because of his peaceful activities as a senior member of a Kurdish political party, the Kurdish Azadi (Freedom) Party in Syria, for which he was carrying out the duties of its exiled leader. Only the ruling Ba'ath Party and parties allied to it are officially allowed to operate in Syria and supporters of unauthorized opposition parties are at constant risk of arrest.

Mustafa Jum'ah suffers from high blood pressure and asthma, two health conditions that may be exacerbated by the harsh detention conditions he may be experiencing now.

Mustafa Jum'ah was first summoned on 6 January to the Military Intelligence's interrogation and detention centre in Aleppo, north-west Syria, where he lives. The centre reportedly referred his case to Far' Falastin, to which, according to information received by Amnesty International, he was summoned on two occasions on 8 January before having to present himself for questioning on 10 January, when he was then taken into detention.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Kurds in Syria suffer discrimination because of their ethnicity; many of them are denied Syrian nationality and cannot receive the full provision of education, employment, health care and other rights enjoyed by Syrian nationals. Kurdish human rights defenders and civil society activists, and those deemed to be associated with Kurdish political parties or groups who raise concerns about the treatment of Kurds in Syria, are particularly at risk of arbitrary arrest and, in many cases, torture. Sa'dun Sheikhu and Mohammad Sai'd 'Omar, two other senior members of the Kurdish Azadi (Freedom) Party in Syria, have been detained incommunicado at Far' Falastin since 25 October 2008. See (UA 339/08, Index: MDE 24/036/2008, 11 December 2008).

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

- expressing concern that Mustafa Jum'ah is detained incommunicado, putting him at risk of torture;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee that Mustafa Jum'ah will not be tortured or otherwise ill-treated, and reminding them that Syria is a state party to the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;
- urging the authorities to allow Mustafa Jum'ah visits from his family immediately, and also access to a lawyer of his own choosing and any medical attention he may require;

- calling on the authorities to release Mustafa Jum'ah immediately unless he is to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- expressing concern that Mustafa Jum'ah may be a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful expression of his rights to freedom of expression and association, and in such a case that he be immediately and unconditionally released.

APPEALS TO:

President

His Excellency Bashar al-Assad
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Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Interior

His Excellency Major General Bassam Abdel Majid
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Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Defence

His Excellency General Hassan Ali Turkmani
Ministry of Defence
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Fax: +963 11 223 7842

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice

His Excellency Muhammad al-Ghafari
Ministry of Justice
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Damascus
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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 13 March 2009.