

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 13/107/2006

25 September 2006

Further Information on UA 132/06 (MDE 24/037/2006, 15 May 2006; MDE 24/041/2006, 2 June 2006; and MDE 13/091/2006, 11 August 2006) – Forcible return/Fear of torture and ill-treatment

IRAN/SYRIA Faleh ‘Abdullah al-Mansuri (m), aged 60, President of the Ahwazi Liberation Organisation (ALO), Dutch national
Rasool Mezrea’ (m), ALO member
Taher ‘Ali Mezrea’ (m), aged 40
Jamal ‘Obeidawi (m), aged 34, student and Chair of Ahwazi Student Union in Syria

According to reports, Faleh ‘Abdullah al-Mansuri may be held in Karoon Prison in Ahvaz city, in Khuzestan province, southwestern Iran. However the whereabouts of the three other men, Rasool Mezrea’, Jamal ‘Obeidawi and Taher ‘Ali Mezrea’ is unclear. Amnesty International remains concerned that all four men are at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

The four men were arrested by Political Security officers in the Syrian capital, Damascus, on 11 May 2006 and were reportedly held incommunicado at an unknown location. Reports at the beginning of August suggested that they were all forcibly returned from Syria to Iran on 16 May. The forcible return of Dutch national Faleh ‘Abdullah al-Mansuri, previously a recognized refugee, has been confirmed by the Syrian authorities and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However the Syrian authorities have not confirmed the return of the other three men and it now appears possible that they remain in detention in Syria in an undisclosed location.

On 15 September 2006, during a press briefing in Geneva, the spokesman of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Ron Redmond, expressed concern about the fate of three Iranian Arabs, believed to be Rasool Mezrea’, Jamal ‘Obeidawi and Taher ‘Ali Mezrea’, who, prior to their detention, had been recognized as refugees by UNHCR and had been accepted for resettlement in Western European countries. Ron Redmond added that the Syrian authorities had promised to give UNHCR staff access to the three men several times, but so far they have not been able to visit the men despite numerous requests.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Much of Iran's Arab community lives in the province of Khuzestan which borders Iraq. Following mass demonstrations in April 2005, and bombings which took place in Ahvaz city in June and October 2005 and in January 2006, hundreds have been arrested and there have been reports of torture and at least two men were executed following unfair trials. At least 13 Iranian Arabs are reportedly under sentence of death, apparently having been designated as “*mohareb*” (at enmity with God). The charges against some or all of them include involvement in the bombings, distributing material against the state, and endangering state security. Amnesty International recognizes the right and responsibility of governments to bring to justice those suspected of criminal offences, but is unconditionally opposed to the death penalty as the ultimate violation of the right to life.

Syria is a State Party to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), which prohibits the return of any individual to a country where they would be at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

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

To the Iranian authorities:

- expressing concern for the safety of Faleh 'Abdullah al-Mansuri who was forcibly returned to Iran from Syria on 16 May 2006;
- expressing concern for the safety of Rasool (or 'Abdulrasool) Mezrea', Jamal 'Obeidawi and Taher 'Ali Mezrea', who may have been forcibly returned to Iran from Syria on 16 May 2006;
- if the men have indeed been returned to Iran, asking for the authorities to disclose their place of detention, and give them immediate access to lawyers, their family, and any medical treatment they may require;
- calling for the immediate release of any of those named currently detained in Iran if they are not to be promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offence, and asking for details of any charges already brought against them;
- seeking assurances that they are not being tortured or ill-treated.

To the Syrian authorities:

- expressing grave concern that the Syrian authorities have forcibly returned one Iranian Arab activist, Faleh 'Abdullah al-Mansuri, and may have returned three others who are recognized refugees, to Iran, where they would be at risk of torture, ill-treatment or the death penalty;
- expressing concern that this is in violation of Syria's obligations under the CAT, and contravenes the principle of *non-refoulement*, which prohibits the return of any person to a situation where they would be at risk of torture, ill-treatment, or other serious human rights abuses;
- urging the Syrian authorities to clarify the whereabouts of Rasool Mezrea', Jamal 'Obeidawi and Taher 'Ali Mezrea';
- if the three are indeed still detained in Syria, calling on the authorities to permit UNHCR staff to visit them;
- if they have been returned to Iran, urging the Syrian authorities to seek information from the Iranian authorities about the men's whereabouts and their wellbeing, and to make this information public.

APPEALS TO:

Iranian authorities:

Leader of the Islamic Republic

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei, The Office of the Supreme Leader, Shoahada Street, Qom, Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: + 98 251 774 2228 (mark "FAO the Office of His Excellency, Ayatollah al Udhma Khamenei")

Email: info@leader.ir OR istiftaa@wilayah.org

Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi
Ministry of Justice, Park-e Shahr, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email via website: <http://www.iranjudiciary.org/contactus-feedback-fa.html>

(The text of the feedback form translates as:

1st line: name; 2nd line: email address; 3rd line: subject heading. Type your message into the text box)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Syrian authorities:

President

His Excellency Bashar al-Assad, Presidential Palace, Abu Rummaneh, al-Rashid Street
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

Fax: + 963 11 332 3410

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of the Interior

His Excellency Major General Bassam Abdel Magid, Ministry of Interior, 'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar Street
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

Fax: + 963 11 2223428

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Iran and Syria accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 6 November 2006