

EXTERNAL

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Medical Concern / Prisoners of Conscience

7 May 1998

SYRIA' Abdalla Qabbara, aged 60, a lawyer
Nu'man 'Abdu, former student
Juryus al-Talli, aged over 60
Jalal Ali Masu'd, aged 48
Akram Wajih al-Bunni, aged 42
Faysal 'Allush, aged 40
Marwan Hammad al-'Ali, aged 36
Munir Sha'bu, aged 35

There has been a serious deterioration in the state of health of the above-named prisoners of conscience. All of the men are serving prison sentences of a minimum of ten years, in extremely harsh conditions, for their involvement in opposition political activities. All require urgent specialist medical care.

'Abdalla Qabbara is suffering from chronic diabetes. He was arrested in 1987 and sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment in 1994 in connection with his involvement with the Communist Party Political Bureau (CPPB). He is being held at the Tadamur Military Prison, known for its harsh conditions. He was reportedly tortured during the interrogation stage of his detention.

The remaining detainees were all arrested and charged in connection with their involvement in the Party for Communist Action (PCA).

Nu'man 'Abdu is suffering from a chronic open leg wound according to reports provided by former prisoners. He was arrested in 1992 and sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment by the Syrian Supreme State Security Court (SSSC). He is held in 'Adra Prison.

Juryus al-Talli is suffering from diabetes and serious ear problems which is believed to have affected his hearing. He was arrested in 1992 or 1993 and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. He is also currently held in 'Adra Prison.

Jalal Masu'd is suffering from serious kidney problems. He was arrested in 1986 and sentenced to 13 years in Sadnaya Prison.

Akram Wajih al-Bunni is believed to be suffering from paralysis in one hand, caused by being tortured on the "German Chair" (a metal chair with moving parts which causes acute hyperextension of the spine and severe pressure on the victim's neck and limbs). He was arrested in 1987 and sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment in Sadnaya Prison.

Faysal 'Allush, Marwan al-'Ali and Munir Sha'bu, all held in Sadnaya Prison, are reportedly suffering from serious eye problems. Munir Sha'bu also suffers from degeneration of the neck vertebrae. All were sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment in 1993.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Hundreds of prisoners of conscience and political prisoners are currently serving long-term prison sentences in Syria, of up to 22 years, in connection with their involvement and membership of various unauthorised political parties. Torture and ill-treatment of such prisoners is routine, particularly

during the interrogation stage of detention. This, combined with a lack of medical care, has led to dozens of deaths in custody in recent years. In 1995 Karim al-Haj Hussain, a prisoner of conscience, died twenty-four hours after his release from custody, as a result of tuberculous meningitis. He was 30 years old and had spent eight years in detention.

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

- urging that the above-named prisoners of conscience be given immediate access to whatever medical care they require;
- calling for their immediate and unconditional release as prisoners of conscience.

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

COPIES TO:

His Excellency
 Dr Muhammad Harba
 Minister of the Interior
 Ministry of the Interior
 Merjeh Circle
 Damascus
 Syrian Arab Republic
Faxes: + 963 11 222 3428
Telexes: 411016 AFIRS SY

His Excellency
 Nasser Qaddur
 Minister of State for Foreign Affairs
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 Al-Rashid Street
 Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

His Excellency
 Dr Iyad al-Shatti
 Minister of Health
 Ministry of Health
 al-Majlis al-Niyabi Street
 Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

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 18 June 1998.