

PUBLIC

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**Further information on EXTRA 71/98 (MDE 24/14/98, 5 October 1998) - Health concern/Legal concern**

**SYRIA            'Abd al-Majid Nimer Zaghmout, Palestinian national, aged 55**

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'Abd al-Majid Nimer Zaghmout died of cancer in a military hospital on 15 February 2000, after more than 33 years' imprisonment. Amnesty International had repeatedly called on the Syrian authorities to release him. The organisation considers the continued detention of 'Abd al-Majid Nimer Zaghmout despite a ministerial ruling ordering his release and while he was known to be terminally ill to amount to cruel and inhuman treatment.

'Abd al-Majid Zaghmout had been in Teshrin Military Hospital, Damascus, since late June 1999, when he underwent an operation for cancer of the lymph glands. He had been unable to eat since the surgery, and had been fed via a tube through his nose.

A former member of Fatah, a mainstream faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), 'Abd al-Majid Nimer Zaghmout was possibly the longest-serving arbitrarily detained political prisoner in the Middle East. He was arrested in 1966 and charged with the murder of Palestinian guerrilla leader Yusuf 'Urabi. He denied the charges and alleged he had been tortured for 46 days after his arrest to force him to confess. After an unfair trial he was sentenced to death by a military court. However, the sentence was never carried out, and he remained in prison despite a ruling in 1989 by the Minister of Defence, General Mustafa Talas, that he should be released unless charged with another criminal offence.

'Abd al-Majid Nimer Zaghmout was one of hundreds of Syrian political prisoners, including prisoners of conscience, who have been detained for years in Syrian jails, many without charge or trial, and others after grossly unfair trials.

**Many thanks to all who sent appeals. No further action is required by the Urgent Action network, but those who wish to may send a final round of telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English, Arabic, French or your own language:**

-expressing deep concern at the failure of the Syrian authorities to release 'Abd al-Majid Nimer Zaghmout despite his terminal illness and stating that this amounted to cruel and inhuman treatment;  
-calling for an investigation into why a ruling by the Syrian Minister of Defence in 1989 ordering the release of 'Abd al-Majid Nimer Zaghmout was not carried out.

**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  
Minster 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**

His Excellency Lt. Gen. Mustafa Talas

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence  
Ministry of Defence, Omayyad Square  
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic  
**Telegrams: General Mustafa Talas, Damascus, Syria**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

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 11 332 7620/332**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

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