

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 24/06/97

UA 95/97 Fear of Torture / Prisoner of Conscience /
Health Concern

8 April 1997

SYRIAMunif Mulhim

Long-term prisoner of conscience Munif Mulhim, who was due for release in mid-1996, is feared to have been transferred back to Tadmur Military Prison, a prison renowned for its harsh conditions and routine torture and ill-treatment. Concern for Munif Mulhim's well-being is further heightened by reports of his poor health (see below).

Munif Mulhim's prison sentence expired in August 1996, when he was reportedly transferred to Far' Falastin Military Prison, pending his release. However, there has been no news of him for more than two months, and according to witnesses, he is no longer in Far' Falastin Military Prison. Reports suggest that he may have been transferred back to Tadmur Military Prison after refusing to sign a statement - as a condition for his release - promising that he will dissociate himself from all past political activities and expressing support for the present regime.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Munif Mulhim, born in 1950 in Homs, was adopted by Amnesty International as a prisoner of conscience in July 1982. He was arrested on 10 August 1981 in connection with the Party of Communist Action (PCA) and held without trial. He was sentenced retroactively to 15 years' imprisonment on 6 February 1994 in an unfair trial by the Supreme State Security Court. He was detained in Tadmur Military Prison.

In August 1984, Munif Mulhim was reported to have suffered a haemorrhage, apparently as a result of torture. Previous information indicated that he was suffering from a malignant genital tumour which required medical attention. Amnesty International issued urgent appeals on his behalf and for two other PCA members who were also reported to be seriously ill as a result of torture.

No response was received from the Syrian authorities. In 1991, Munif Mulhim and some other prisoners in Tadmur Military Prison were again reported to be in poor health and in need of medical attention. A medical action was issued on their behalf on 15 October 1991 (MDE 24/06/91).

The practice of transferring prisoners to Tadmur as a form of punishment has occurred on several occasions in the past. Twenty-nine prisoners were transferred there in January 1996 (see UA 16/96, MDE 24/03/96, 26 January 1996 and update, MDE 24/04/96). One of them, Yassin al-Haj Salih, was detained for 13 months in Tadmur Military Prison after his sentence expired and was finally released in January 1997.

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

- expressing deep concern at reports that Munif Mulhim, due for release in August 1996, has been transferred back to Tadmur Military Prison;
- calling for his immediate and unconditional release as a prisoner of conscience;
- seeking assurances that he is being treated humanely in accordance with international standards, and urging he be granted all the medical care he requires.

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
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 24 May 1997.