

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 268/06 (MDE 24/060/2006, 04 October 2006) – Prisoner of conscience/medical concern

SYRIA Dr 'Aref Dalilah (m), aged 65, former Dean of the Faculty of Economics, Aleppo University

'Aref Dalilah, a prisoner of conscience who has served half of a 10-year sentence in solitary confinement, is gravely ill with deep-vein thrombosis in one leg and a blood clot in his lungs. He may die if he is not allowed to be admitted to hospital immediately.

'Aref Dalilah is held in the political wing of 'Adra prison, in the capital, Damascus. He has diabetes and suffers from deep-vein thrombosis, which impedes or stops blood flow in his leg. As a result, his leg is said to be turning black. Tests carried out by doctors have shown that he has a blood clot in his lungs and apparent swelling of the right ventricle of his heart. He is receiving blood-thinning medication in prison, but Amnesty International has learnt that 'Aref Dalilah's doctors say he urgently needs to be brought to hospital for medical supervision of his condition.

In May 2006 'Aref Dalilah had a stroke which means that he has lost some feeling on the left side of his body.

'Aref Dalilah was sentenced on 31 July 2002 by the Syrian Supreme State Security Court (SSSC), whose procedures fall far short of international standards of fair trial, on charges of "attempting to change the constitution by illegal means". Since his conviction 'Aref Dalilah has been kept in an attic room that is very cold and damp in winter and extremely hot in summer.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

'Aref Dalilah was arrested in Damascus on 9 September 2001. He is a former Dean of the Faculty of Economics of Aleppo University, and a founding member of the Preparatory Committees of the Civil Society Forum. 'Aref Dalilah was dismissed from his post as Dean of the Economic Faculty, reportedly due to his outspoken views against corruption and his calls for granting freedom of expression to complement economic reform. He was also said to have taken part in the political seminar held on 5 September 2001 in the house of Riad Seif, a former prisoner of conscience who has recently been detained again (see UA 333/07, MDE 24/045/2007, 17 December 2007, and follow-ups).

'Aref Dalilah was also reportedly beaten and ill-treated at 'Adra prison. His lawyer, 'Anwar al-Bunni, who is also a current prisoner of conscience imprisoned in 'Adra prison for five years, presented a bloodstained handkerchief as evidence of 'Aref Dalilah's ill-treatment during a SSSC hearing on 3 June 2002. The court chairperson, a military officer, then ordered 'Anwar al-Bunni out of the court and issued a decision banning him indefinitely from practising before the SSSC.

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

- stating that 'Aref Dalilah is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for the peaceful expression of his beliefs;
- noting that he is gravely ill with diabetes, deep-vein thrombosis and a blood clot in his lungs, and that his poor health will be exacerbated by his continued imprisonment;
- seeking assurances that all possible medical treatment is afforded to him without delay
- calling for his immediate and unconditional release.

APPEALS TO:

President

His Excellency Bashar al-Assad
Presidential Palace
al-Rashid Street

Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

Fax: + 963 11 332 3410

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Interior

His Excellency Major General Bassam Abdel Majid
Ministry of Interior

'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar Street

Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

Fax: +963 11 222 3428

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice

His Excellency Muhammad al-Ghafari
Ministry of Justice

Al-Nasr Street, Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

Fax: +963 11 666 2460

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Foreign Affairs

His Excellency Walid Mu'allim

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

al-Rashid Street

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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 21 March 2008.