

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Further information on UA 292/93 (MDE 24/07/93, 26 August 1993) Fear of torture/legal concern

SYRIA: Hassiba 'Abd al-Rahman (female) (released)
Asia Mahmud (female) (released)
Khadija Dib (female), aged 34, student
Fadwa Mahmud (female), aged 33
Tuhama Ma'ruf (female), aged about 26, medical student
Doha 'Ashur al-'Askari (female), aged 29, with young baby
and new names: Filya 'Abbas (female) (new arrest)
Raghda Hassan (female) (new arrest)

Amnesty International has received information that Hassiba 'Abd al-Rahman and Asia Mahmud were released at the end of November 1993, but is concerned that six other women, one with a young baby, remain in detention. The organization believes the detainees may be prisoners of conscience. It is further concerned by reports that two of the women, Filya 'Abbas and Raghda Hassan, are being held incommunicado and may be at risk of torture. Their current whereabouts are unknown. The two were reportedly arrested at the end of November by members of al-Mukhabarat al-'Askariyya, Military Intelligence, in Damascus.

Khadija Dib, Fadwa Mahmud, Tuhama Ma'ruf and Doha 'Ashur al-'Askari are currently held in Duma Women's Prison in Damascus and are said to be in the process of being tried by the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC), together with more than 500 other political detainees and prisoners of conscience facing charges of membership or links with various unauthorized political parties. The four are believed to have been interrogated by the SSSC prosecutor, but Amnesty International does not know if any charges have been brought against them and whether they have been granted legal assistance.

The four are all being held on suspicion of membership of or having links with the Party for Communist Action (PCA). Khadija Dib, a student of French literature and former prisoner of conscience, has been held since March 1992. She had previously been detained at least twice in connection with the PCA, in 1984 and February 1992. Her husband, Qais Darwish who has been in detention since 1984, is currently being tried by the SSSC, together with more than 250 others charged with membership or links with the PCA. At least 54 of these defendants have recently been sentenced to lengthy prison terms ranging from 3 to 15 years. Fadwa Mahmud, a mother of two children, was also arrested in March 1992, apparently for having had contact with Khadija Dib. The remaining two detainees, Tuhama Ma'ruf, and Doha 'Ashur al-'Askari, a former student of English, were arrested in December 1992 and February 1993 respectively. Doha 'Ashur al-'Askari had been living in hiding since 1986 when the authorities began to seek her

arrest in connection with the PCA. Her brother, Usama 'Ashur al-'Askari, is among the 250 or so being tried in connection with the PCA. He has been in detention since 1982. At the time of her recent arrest she was pregnant and is reported to have given birth in prison in July or August to a baby girl named Kamilya. Her baby is said to be living with her in prison. Amnesty International does not know whether she is being given adequate child care provisions.

Filya 'Abbas and Raghda Hassan are also said to be suspected of having links with the PCA.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes and airmail letters either in English or in your own language:

- welcoming the release of Hassiba 'Abd al-Rahman and Asia Mahmud;
- seeking details about the whereabouts of Filya 'Abbas and Raghda Hassan;
- seeking assurances that all six detainees named above are being treated humanely and are given access to family, lawyers and medical attention, if necessary;
- expressing concern that the six detainees who continue to be held may be prisoners of conscience and urging that if that is the case that they should be released immediately and unconditionally;
- asking for details about the charges and evidence against them as well as the dates and places of any pending trial procedures;
- seeking details about the conditions of detention of Doha 'Ashur al-'Askari and her baby Kamilya and urging that pending her release she is given all necessary child care provisions in accordance with international standards.

APPEALS TO

1) His Excellency
President Hafez al-Assad
Presidential Palace
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: President Al-Assad, Damascus, Syria
Telexes: 419160 munjed sy
Salutation: Your Excellency

2) His Excellency
Muhammad Harba
Minister of the Interior
Ministry of the Interior
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: Interior Minister, Damascus, Syria
Telexes: 411018 AFIRS SY
Salutation: Your Excellency

3) His Excellency 'Abdallah Talaba
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Naser Street
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: Justice Minister, Damascus, Syria
Telexes : 411018 AFIRS SY
Salutation: Your Excellency

4) His Excellency Naser Qaddur

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

Telegrams: Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Damascus, Syria

Telexes: 411922 AFIRS SY

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS 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 12 January 1994.