

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 24/013/2002

7 May 2002

Further information on UA 217/01 (MDE 24/027/2001, 3 September 2001) - Prisoner of conscience/Health concern

SYRIARial al-Turk (m), aged 72, lawyer

Prisoner of conscience Riad al-Turk's blood sugar level and blood pressure have reportedly increased, despite medical checks and regular administration of insulin. He suffers from diabetes and hypertension, and Amnesty International fears that spending over six months in custody without access to his lawyer may have caused his health to worsen.

Riad al-Turk was receiving emergency treatment for a heart problem when he was arrested on 1 September 2001. He had a major heart surgery in 1999.

Amnesty International believes he is a prisoner of conscience, arrested solely for his peaceful activities as a leading member of an opposition coalition, the National Democratic Alliance. He has been charged with offences including "attempting to change the Constitution by illegal means", "inciting racial and sectarian strife" and "dissemination of false information".

He was brought before the Supreme Sate Military Court (SSSC) in Damascus on 28 April for the first hearing of his trial. He told the Court that he had not been told when the hearing would take place, and had not been given documents relating to his case. He said his trial was unlawful and that he had no case to answer. The trial was attended by his lawyer, his wife, and diplomats from the European Union and other countries.

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

- expressing concern that Riad al-Turk's health has deteriorated further, and urging the authorities to provide him with any medical care he may need;
- calling for him to be released immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency
President Bashar al-Assad
Presidential Palace
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: President al-Assad, Damascus, Syria
Telexes: 419160 prespl sy
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency
Nabil al-Khatib
Ministry of Justice
Al-Nasr Street
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: Justice Minister, Damascus, Syria
e-mail: moj@net.sy
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency
Maj-Gen Ali Hammud

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Minister of the Interior
Ministry of the Interior
Merjeh Circle
Damascus

Syrian Arab Republic

Telegrams: Interior Minister, Damascus, Syria

Telexes: 411016 AFIRS SY

Salutation: Your Excellency

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

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.