

Fear of torture

SYRIAMuhammad Ghazi Hubayib (m), aged around 50, doctor

Muhammad Ghazi Hubayib was arrested on 16 April at Damascus airport, when he returned from exile, and has been held incommunicado since then. His arrest is apparently connected to his former affiliation to the unauthorized Muslim Brotherhood Organization, and Amnesty International fears that he may be tortured. Another former member of the organisation who returned in similar circumstances died in custody earlier this year.

It is feared that he may be held at one of the Syrian intelligence interrogation centres in Damascus, where torture of detainees is routine.

Muhammad Ghazi Hubayib is a former member of the unauthorized Muslim Brotherhood Organization, whose armed factions were involved in violent confrontations with the Syrian security forces in the late 1970s and 1980s. In the past few years the group has called for national reconciliation and respect for the rule of law, and has publicly denounced the use of violence by factions within the Muslim Brotherhood Organization.

Muhammad Ghazi Hubayib had been living in exile since the late 1970s, and had been working in Saudi Arabia as a chest physician. He decided to return home after informing the Syrian authorities.

Muhammad Ghazi Hubayib is the third person to be detained after returning voluntarily from exile since February 2002. Nawras Husain al-Ramadan and Muhammad Hasan Nassar were arrested in February and March respectively. Muhammad Hasan Nassar died in custody after a week of incommunicado detention.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Exiled activists affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood Organization risk serious human rights violations, including trials under Law 49 which regards affiliation to the Muslim Brotherhood Organization an offence punishable by death.

Violent confrontations between armed factions of the Muslim Brotherhood Organization and the Syrian security forces in the late 1970s and early 1980s resulted in serious human rights violations, including the deaths of scores of civilians. In July 1980 hundreds of suspected affiliates of the Muslim Brotherhood Organization held in Tadmur Military Prison were reportedly extrajudicially executed. During these events and the following years several thousand suspected members, supporters, or relatives of the Muslim Brotherhood were detained or "disappeared". Thousands of others were released in 1990 following amnesties decreed by the late President Hafiz al-Asad.

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

- urging the authorities to reveal where Muhammad Ghazi Hubayib is held, and allow him immediate access to lawyers and his family;
- seeking assurances that Muhammad Ghazi Hubayib is being well treated and not subjected to torture and ill-treatment.

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
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.