

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 24/016/2008

19 June 2008

UA 177/08 Fear of torture or ill-treatment

SYRIA Mahmoud al-Najjar (m), aged 48, teacher

Teacher Mahmoud al-Najjar was arrested on 16 June at his house in Aleppo city by State Security agents who also confiscated political publications. His whereabouts are unknown, and he is in grave danger of torture.

It is not known why Mahmoud al-Najjar was arrested, but he is known to have attended a meeting of the pro-democracy umbrella group Damascus Declaration for Democratic National Change (DDDNC) on 1 December 2007 as a representative of the DDDNC members who were not affiliated to any other organisation. Twelve other people who attended the meeting have all been detained. Eleven are held in harsh conditions at 'Adra prison, near Damascus, while the twelfth is held at a women's prison in Douma near Damascus. (See UA 333/07, MDE 24/045/2007, 17 December 2007 and follow-ups).

Mahmoud al-Najjar is a primary school teacher and suffers from chronic lung infection, joint pain, a slipped disc and migraines.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The government began to crack down on the DDDNC on 9 December 2007. So far 47 DDDNC members have been arrested, of whom 34 were released within a few days. None of the 34 are known to have been charged.

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

- expressing great concern that Mahmoud al-Najjar is detained incommunicado at an unknown location;
- asking why he was detained, and where he is held;
- calling on the authorities to release Mahmoud al-Najjar immediately unless he is to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee that he will not be tortured or otherwise ill-treated, and reminding them that Syria is a state party to the UN Convention Against Torture;
- urging the authorities to immediately allow him visits from his family, a lawyer of his choosing and any medical treatment he may require.

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 Defence

His Excellency General Hassan Ali Turkmani

Ministry of Defence

Omayyad Square

Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Fax: +963 11 223 7842
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
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Fax: + 963 11 3327620
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 31 July 2008.