

PUBLIC

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Prisoner

SYRIARIad al-Turk, aged 71, lawyer

Lawyer Riad al-Turk, a leading opposition activist, was arrested by the security forces on 1 September. He was apparently receiving emergency medical treatment for a heart problem at the time, in the city of Tartus. It is not known where he is held.

Riad al-Turk is a leading member of the National Democratic Alliance, an opposition coalition of left-wing and Arab Nationalist groups.

Amnesty International considers him a prisoner of conscience, arrested solely for his peaceful opposition activities. The organization is also concerned about his health: as well as the heart condition for which he was being treated when he was arrested, he has diabetes. He underwent major heart surgery about two years ago.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Riad al-Turk was detained as a prisoner of conscience from 1980 to 1998 because of his opposition to the Syrian government. He was held without charge or trial, mostly incommunicado, in the Military Interrogation Branch (*Far' al-Tahqiq al-'Askari*) in Damascus. He was eventually released under an amnesty declared by the late President Hafiz al-Assad in May 1998.

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

- calling for Riad al-Turk to be released immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience;
- seeking assurances that he is being well treated in custody and not tortured or ill-treated;
- urging the authorities to ensure that he is allowed immediate access to his family, lawyer and any medical care he needs, including immediate referral to a specialist physician, and medication for his heart condition and diabetes.

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
Fax: + 963 11 224 6250
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency
Dr Muhammad Harba
Minister of the Interior

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Ministry of the Interior
Merjeh Circle
Damascus
Syrian Arab Republic
Faxes: + 963 11 222 3428
Telexes: 411016 AFIRS SY
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

His Excellency
Nasser Qaddur
State Minister for Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Al-Rashid Street
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Fax: + 963 11 332 0686
Salutation: Your Excellency

and 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 15 October 2001.