

PUBLIC

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Torture/Health concern/Prisoner of conscience

28 September

SYRIA Wajih Ghanim (m), aged 52

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the health of Prisoner of conscience Wajih Ghanim. He has reportedly recently lost his ability to walk and is bed bound, as a result of complications arising from torture in the early 1990s. He has a number of medical and psychological problems and is reportedly unwilling to receive visitors or communicate with his fellow prisoners. He is being held at Sednaya Prison on the outskirts of the capital Damascus.

Wajih Ghanim was reportedly tortured using electric shocks and the "German chair" (a metal chair with moving parts, which stretches the spine and causes severe pressure on the victim's neck and limbs).

He is said to be suffering from degeneration of the vertebrae, chronic headaches, hypertension, a urinary tract infection and stomach problems. His psychological condition has been steadily deteriorating since November 2000, when all but nine of his fellow prisoners of conscience from the Party for Communist Action (PCA) were released following a Presidential amnesty.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Wajih Ghanim is a former government employee, married and has one child. He was arrested in August 1987 in the coastal city of Latakia. He was charged with affiliation to the PCA, and "opposing the objectives of the Revolution". He was reportedly tortured and ill-treated while being interrogated by the Syrian security forces following his arrest, apparently in an attempt to extract information about the PCA and its membership. In the early 1990s, he was again reportedly tortured using electric shocks and the "German Chair", in Tadmur and Sednaya Prisons. He reportedly suffered from internal bleeding and a paralysed arm and had to be hospitalized. In 1994, he was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment with hard labour following an unfair trial before the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC).

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

-calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Wajih Ghanim as a prisoner of conscience;
-asking for him to be urgently provided with specialist medical care in accordance with international human rights standards including Article 22 of the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

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
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice

Al-Nasr Street
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: Justice Minister, Damascus, Syria
Fax: + 963 11 224 6250
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency
Dr Muhammad Harba
Minister of the Interior
Ministry of the Interior
Merjeh Circle
Damascus
Syrian Arab Republic
Telegrams: Interior Minister, Damascus, Syria
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 09 November 2001.