

PUBLIC

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UA 362/03 Fear of torture and ill-treatment/unlawful detention/incommunicado detention

SYRIA/
CANADA

Arwad Muhammad 'Izzat Al-Buchi (m), aged 45, engineer

Amnesty International is gravely concerned at reports that Arwad Muhammad 'Izzat Al-Buchi, a Canadian/Syrian national, has been subjected to torture and ill-treatment in prolonged incommunicado detention in Syria. He is at risk of further torture or ill treatment.

According to reports, Arwad Muhammad 'Izzat Al-Buchi has been held since 20 July 2002, following his return to Syria after 23 years in exile in Canada and Saudi Arabia. He was arrested upon arrival at Damascus airport despite assurances by the Syrian authorities of his safety. He remained in detention since then, except for a brief period in 2002 when he was permitted to attend his father's funeral.

On 1 April 2003, he was transferred to Sednaya prison, where he is still held. For part of his detention period, he was held at the Palestine Branch of Military Intelligence in the capital Damascus, where he was reportedly subjected to torture, and was kept in solitary confinement for prolonged periods. He is being held incommunicado in Sednaya prison. Amnesty International has received a number of reports of torture and ill-treatment at the prison, including that of 'Abdallah al Malki, another Canadian/Syrian national held incommunicado (see UA 313/03, MDE 24/038/2003, 4 November 2003).

Arwad Muhammad 'Izzat Al-Buchi has reportedly not been charged with any offence but it is thought that his suspected association with alleged members of the unauthorized opposition group the Muslim Brotherhood Organization may be the cause for his arrest and detention.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has repeatedly raised concerns about the use of torture of political detainees in Syrian prisons. Arwad Muhammad 'Izzat Al-Buchi is the third Canadian/Syrian national to be held incommunicado and reportedly tortured in Syria this year. Maher Arar, also a Canadian/Syrian national, was held without charge and reportedly tortured by the Syrian authorities for up to one year until his release on 5 October 2003, after which he returned to Canada (see UA 314/02, AMR 51/159/2002 and follow-ups). He had been deported from the USA via Jordan in October 2002.

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

To the Syrian authorities:

- expressing concern at the reports that Arwad Muhammad 'Izzat Al-Buchi is being tortured and ill-treated;
- calling for an immediate investigation into the reports that Arwad Muhammad 'Izzat Al-Buchi has been tortured and ill-treated, with the results to be made public and anyone found responsible to be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to ensure that Arwad Muhammad 'Izzat Al-Buchi's rights are fully respected, including the right to humane treatment; the right to be informed of the reasons for the detention and to be able to challenge the lawfulness of the detention; the right to the presumption of innocence; the right to prompt access to and assistance of a lawyer; and the right to be able to communicate with, and receive visits from family and friends;
- urging that Arwad Muhammad 'Izzat Al-Buchi be given immediate and unrestricted access to Canadian consular officials;

- urging the authorities to provide Arwad Muhammad 'Izzat Al-Buchi with any medical treatment he may require;
- expressing concern that Arwad Muhammad 'Izzat Al-Buchi has been held for nearly one and a half years without charge or trial;
- calling for his the immediate release unless he is to be charged with a recognizable criminal offence and given a prompt and fair trial.

To the Canadian authorities:

- drawing their attention to the case of the reported torture and incommunicado detention without charge of Canadian/Syrian national Arwad Muhammad 'Izzat Al-Buchi;
- urging that they make representations to the Syrian government to ensure that Arwad Muhammad 'Izzat Al-Buchi is treated humanely and not subjected to any further torture or other ill-treatment;
- calling for him to be given immediate access to Canadian consular officials, lawyers, relatives and adequate medical treatment;
- urging that he be released unless he is to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and given a prompt and fair trial.

APPEALS TO:

Syrian Authorities:

His Excellency
 President Bashar al-Assad
 Presidential Palace
 Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegram: President al-Assad, Damascus, Syria
Telex: 419160 prespl sy
Fax: + 963 11 332 3410
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency
 Maj-Gen 'Ali Hammud
 Minister of the Interior
 Ministry of the Interior
 Merjeh Circle, Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Telegram: Interior Minister, Damascus, Syria
Fax: + 963 11 222 3428
Telex: 411016 AFIRS SY
Salutation: Your Excellency

Canadian Authorities:

The Honorable William Graham
 Minister of Foreign Affairs
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 125 Sussex Drive
 Ottawa, ON, Canada, K1A 0G2
Telegram: Foreign Affairs Minister, Ontario, Canada
Fax: + 1 613 996 9709
Salutation: Dear Minister

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 22 January 2004.