

PUBLIC

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UA 366/02

Incommunicado detention/Fear of torture and ill-treatment/  
Prisoners of conscience

18 December 2002

SYRIA

Hassan Saleh (m), aged 60  
Marwan 'Uthman (m)

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On 15 December, prisoners of conscience Hassan Saleh and Marwan 'Uthman, leading members of the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Unity Party, were reportedly detained in Damascus following an invitation for a meeting by the Minister of the Interior, Major General 'Ali Hammud. There are fears that both men are at risk of torture and ill-treatment.

On 10 December, the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Unity Party held a peaceful demonstration with some 200 participants before the National Assembly in Damascus. Hassan Saleh and Marwan 'Uthman were among those who presented a memorandum from the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Unity Party to the President of the National Assembly, Abdul Qadir Qadurah. The memorandum demanded greater protection for the rights of Kurds living in Syria.

The following day members of the Syrian security forces reportedly searched both men's houses in Qamishli and 'Ayn al-Arab in Northern Syria. Hassan Saleh's son, Siamant Saleh, and Marwan 'Uthman's brother, Ahmad 'Uthman, were taken from the houses and interrogated by members of the Syrian Security forces. They were released after five hours.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Torture and ill-treatment is routinely inflicted on Syrian Kurdish political detainees while they are held incommunicado in Syrian prisons and detention centres.

The Syrian authorities impose heavy restrictions on the production and circulation of Kurdish literature, including books and music. In the past, the Syrian authorities have arrested and detained Syrian Kurds without charge for their involvement in the organization of Kurdish cultural activities, including the Kurdish *Nawruz* (New Year) celebrations.

On 20 March, another member of the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Unity Party, Hussain Daoud was sentenced to two years in prison following an unfair trial before the Supreme State Security Court. (See UA 107/01, MDE 24/005/2001, 26 April 2001)

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

- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of prisoners of conscience Hassan Saleh and Marwan 'Uthman, who were detained on 15 December, solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly;
- seeking assurances that they are being well treated and not subjected to torture or ill-treatment;
- urging that they be allowed immediate and unrestricted access to their family, lawyer or any medical care that they may need;
- urging the Syrian authorities to ensure the right to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly in accordance with international human rights standards such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (see Articles 18, 19, 21, 22) to which Syria is a state-party.

**APPEALS TO:**

His Excellency President Bashar al-Assad  
President of the Republic  
Presidential Palace

Abu Rummaneh, Al-Rashid Street  
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

**Fax: + 963 11 332 3410**

**Telegrams: President al-Assad, Damascus, Syria**

**Telexes: 419160 prespl sy**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

His Excellency Major General Ali Hammud  
Minister of the Interior  
Ministry of Interior  
Merjeh Circle

Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

**Fax: + 963 11 222 3428**

**Telegrams: Interior Minister, Damascus, Syria**

**Telexes: 411016 AFIRS SY**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**COPIES TO** 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 29 January 2003.