

PUBLIC

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Torture and ill-treatment / medical concern/
Incommunicado detention

28 September 2004

SYRIA/
AUSTRALIA

Ayman Ardeli, (m), about 44 years old (Australian/Syrian dual national)

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the health and welfare of Ayman Ardeli. He is being held in prolonged, incommunicado detention at the heavily overcrowded cells of the *Far' Filisteen* (Palestine Branch) of Military Intelligence, in the capital Damascus.

Australian and Syrian national, Ayman Ardeli was arrested at Damascus airport around August 2003 after reportedly leaving Syria as a teenager. He has not been charged with any offence and it is thought that his arrest and detention may be connected to his father's previous involvement with the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood. He was initially detained at the Aleppo Branch of Military Intelligence where it is believed he was tortured and ill-treated, before being transferred to the so-called "tomb" cells in the basement of *Far' Filisteen*.

Ayman Ardeli is believed to be held in communal cells measuring 475cm by 475cm with between 20 and 60 other people in conditions which are cruel, inhuman and degrading. He has been held in prolonged, incommunicado detention for about 13 months without access to his family, a lawyer, or Consular officials.

Ayman Ardeli is said to be "desperately depressed" and has reportedly tried to commit suicide. He is also said to be suffering from severe migraines, heart problems and high blood pressure. His own medication was taken away from him upon his detention and has reportedly been replaced with local Syrian medicine which is said to be inadequate for his pains.

Australia does not have an embassy or consulate in Syria and conducts any diplomatic activity there through the Canadian Consulate.

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

- expressing concern at the reports that Ayman Ardeli is being kept in prolonged, incommunicado detention in cruel, inhuman and degrading conditions at the heavily overcrowded cells of the *Far' Filisteen* (Palestine Branch) of Military Intelligence, in Damascus;
- expressing concern at the reports that Ayman Ardeli is "desperately depressed", has tried to commit suicide, and is being denied access to his appropriate medicine;
- urging the authorities to ensure that Ayman Ardeli's rights are fully respected, including the right to humane treatment; the right to be informed of the reasons for his 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 Ayman Ardeli be given immediate and unrestricted access to Australian or Canadian consular officials;
- urging the authorities to provide Ayman Ardeli with appropriate medical treatment;
- expressing concern that Ayman Ardeli has been held for about 13 months without charge or trial and calling for his immediate release unless he is to be charged with a recognizable criminal offence and given a prompt and fair trial.

To the Australian authorities:

- drawing their attention to the case of Australian/Syrian national Ayman Ardeli;

-stating that he was reportedly tortured and ill-treated prior to his incommunicado detention at the heavily overcrowded cells of the *Far' Filisteen* (Palestine Branch) of Military Intelligence, in Damascus, Syria where he is being held without charge;

- urging that they make representations to the Syrian government to ensure that Ayman Ardeli is treated humanely and not subjected to any further ill-treatment;

-calling for him to be given immediate access to consular officials, lawyers, relatives and adequate medical treatment;

-calling on them to ask the Syrian government to ensure that Ayman Ardeli 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
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
Fax: + 963 11 222 3428
Salutation: Your Excellency

Australian Authorities

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Alexander Downer, MP
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT
Australia
Fax: +61 2 6273 4112
Email: minister.downer@dfat.gov.au
Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of SYRIA or AUSTRALIA accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 9 November 2004.