

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 24/002/2009

29 January 2009

Further Information on UA 328/08 (MDE 24/035/2008, 28 November 2008) Incommunicado detention/ fear of torture or other ill-treatment

SYRIA Nabil Khlioui (m), aged 49, telecommunications worker

New names: ‘Abdel Hadi al-Salameh (m), university student
Belal Sufian (m)
Iyad Hussein (m)
Mohammed Taha (m)
Thabet al-Hasan (m)
‘Abdel Razaq al-Kbaisy (m)
Mansour Khero al-Atrash (m)
Khaldoun al-Jazaery (m)

Deceased: Mohammed Amin al-Shawa (m), 42, mathematics teacher

The 10 men named above were arrested by Military Intelligence agents in August 2008. One of them, Mohammed Amin al-Shawa, died in custody in January 2009, according to Syrian human rights organizations, as a result of being tortured. His death has increased concern for the safety of the remaining nine detainees, who, according to reports received by Amnesty International, may be held at the Palestine Branch, a Military Intelligence interrogation and detention centre in Damascus, which is notorious for torture.

On 10 January 2009, Military Intelligence agents reportedly returned the body of Mohammed Amin al-Shawa to the city of Deir az-Zawr in eastern Syria, where they are said to have allowed his family to see his face but not the rest of his body before he was buried on the same day in their presence.

The 10 men were among scores of individuals arrested in August 2008, mostly in Deir az-Zawr, but also in the cities of Aleppo and Hama. According to Syrian human rights organizations, many appear to have been arrested because the authorities interpreted their appearance and lifestyle as indications of their affiliation to unauthorized Islamist groups.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There are widespread reports of torture and other ill-treatment in Syria's detention and interrogation centres. People suspected of affiliation to unauthorized Islamist groups or of possessing information about terrorism-related offences, are at particular risk of arbitrary detention, torture or other ill-treatment. Syrian security forces generally enjoy impunity for such violations.

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

- expressing concern about reports that Mohammed Amin al-Shawa died in custody as a result of being tortured, and calling on the authorities to immediately order a thorough, independent and impartial investigation into the death, to make its results public and to bring those allegedly responsible to justice in trial proceedings that meet international standards of fairness and do not carry the possible imposition of the death penalty;
- expressing concern that the nine remaining detainees (name them) are being held in prolonged incommunicado detention and that, given this and reports that Mohammed Amin al-Shawa's died under torture, they are at risk of torture or other ill-treatment;

- calling on the authorities to guarantee that the nine men will not be tortured or otherwise ill-treated, and reminding them that Syria is a state party to the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which bans torture and other ill treatment under any circumstances;
- calling on the authorities to immediately allow the nine men visits from their families, access to lawyers of their choosing and any medical treatment they may require;
- calling on the authorities to release the nine men immediately unless they are to be charged with recognizably criminal offences and tried promptly in proceedings which meet fair trial standards.

APPEALS TO:

President

His Excellency Bashar al-Assad
Presidential Palace
al-Rashid Street
Damascus
Syrian Arab Republic

Fax: + 963 11 332 3410

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Defence

His Excellency General Hassan Ali Turkmani
Ministry of Defence
Omayyad Square
Damascus
Syrian Arab Republic

Fax: + 963 11 223 7842

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice

His Excellency Muhammad al-Ghafari
Ministry of Justice
al-Nasr Street
Damascus
Syrian Arab Republic

Fax: + 963 11 666 2460

Salutation: Your Excellency

Ministry of Interior

His Excellency Major General Bassam Abdel Majid
Minister of Interior
'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar Street
Damascus
Syrian Arab Republic

Fax: + 963 11 222 3428

Salutation: Your Excellency

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 16 March 2009.