

PUBLIC

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UA 328/08 Incommunicado detention/ fear of torture or other ill-treatment

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

Nabil Khlioui has been held incommunicado at an unknown location since 13 August. The authorities have not disclosed where he is held, why he was arrested or whether he will be charged and tried. Nabil Khlioui's detention amounts to an enforced disappearance under international law, and he is at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

Nabil Khlioui was arrested on 13 August at 3am at his house in Deir az-Zawr city, north-east of the capital, Damascus.

In August 2008, scores of alleged Islamists, described by Syrian human rights organizations as moderate, were arrested mostly from Deir az-Zawr city, and some from Aleppo and Hama cities. At least 12 others, in addition to Nabil Khlioui, are still held incommunicado at an unknown location.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Torture and other ill-treatment are widespread 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 arrest and imprisonment in Syria. In 2007, more than 170 people were sentenced after grossly unfair trials before the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC), ordinary criminal courts and military courts; most were alleged to be members of unauthorized Islamist groups. In March 2007 the SSSC convicted 24 men from the Qatana area, near Damascus, of "forming an organization with the aim of changing the economic or social status of the state" and "weakening nationalist sentiment", apparently solely on the basis of "confessions" which the men said had been extracted from them under torture. The SSSC sentenced them to between four and 12 years in prison, but failed to investigate the men's claim they have been tortured.

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

- urging the authorities to reveal the whereabouts of Nabil Khlioui immediately;
- calling for his immediate release unless he is to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and tried promptly in proceedings which meet fair trial standards;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that he 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;
- urging the authorities to immediately allow him visits from his family, access to a lawyer of his choosing and any medical treatment he may require.

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 9 January 2009.