

URGENT ACTION

RELEASED AFTER A YEAR INCOMMUNICADO

Usra al-Hussein, a Syrian woman whose husband is being held by the US, was released on 18 July after spending nearly a year in incommunicado detention without charge or trial.

Usra al-Hussein was arrested by State Security officials, on 31 July 2008, from her home in the village of al-'Otayba, 20km east of Damascus, after contacting an international organization regarding the detention conditions of her husband.

Since her arrest on Usra al-Hussein was permitted no contact with the outside world and her family were given no information by the Syrian authorities as to where she was being held or why she had been arrested. Amnesty International does not yet have information on her treatment during detention.

Usra al-Hussein's husband, Jihad Diab, has been held without charge or trial as an "enemy combatant" in the US detention centre at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, since August 2002.

No further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

This is the first update of UA 261/08 MDE 24/028/2008. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/028/2008/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Detainees in Syrian detention and investigation centres are often held incommunicado, facilitating the widespread practice of torture and other ill-treatment. Suspects of affiliation to unauthorized Islamist groups are at particular risk of arbitrary arrest and detention.

One such person who remains in detention is Nabil Khlioui, who has been held incommunicado, without charge or trial, at the Palestine Branch, a Military Intelligence interrogation and detention centre in Damascus which is notorious for torture, since his arrest in August 2008. Nabil Khlioui was among scores of individuals arrested during that month, mostly in the city of Deir az-Zawr, but also in the cities of Aleppo and Hama. For further information see UA 328/08 and the follow up UA at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/002/2009/en>.

According to Syrian human rights organizations, many appeared to have been arrested because the authorities interpreted their appearance and lifestyle as indications of their affiliation to unauthorized Islamist groups.

Further information UA 261/08: Index: MDE 24/020/2009 Issue Date: 23 July 2009

