

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

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### **Syria: Seven more advocates of reform sentenced to prison terms after unfair trial**

Amnesty International is greatly concerned by the imprisonment of seven peaceful advocates of political reform in Syria who were sentenced to prison terms on 17 June 2007 after an unfair trial in Damascus. All seven were tried before the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC), whose procedures fail to satisfy international fair trial standards and from which there is no right of appeal.

All seven -Maher Isber Ibrahim, aged 26, Tareq al-Ghorani, Hussam 'Ali Mulhim, Diab Siriyeh, and 'Omar 'Ali al'Abdullah, all aged 22, and 29-year-old 'Allam Fakhour, and Ayham Saqr, aged 31 – were all convicted of “taking action or making a written statement or speech which could endanger the State or harm its relationship with a foreign country, or expose it to the risk of hostile action” under Article 278 of the Syrian Penal Code. Maher Isber Ibrahim and Tareq al-Ghorani were also convicted of “broadcasting of false news” under Article 287 of the Code; they received seven year prison sentences while their five co-accused, all students except Ayham Saqr who works in a beauty salon, received five year terms. An eighth man, 'Ali Nizar 'Ali, was released under an amnesty on 28 December 2006.

The seven are believed to have been arrested and tried because of their involvement in developing a youth discussion group and for publishing pro-democracy articles on the internet. They were arrested by Air Force Intelligence (AFI) officials between 26 January and 18 March 2006 and then reportedly detained in solitary confinement until the end of April 2006. During their trial, in November 2006, all seven defendants denied the charges and repudiated “confessions” that they alleged had been extracted from them under torture and duress while they were held in incommunicado detention. However, the court failed to undertake any investigation and accepted the contested “confessions” as evidence against the defendants.

Amnesty International considers all seven to be prisoners of conscience and is calling for their immediate and unconditional release.