

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 24/037/2007

20 June 2007

Further Information on UA 41/06 (MDE 24/019/2006, 17 February 2006); and follow-ups (MDE 24/020/2006, 21 February 2006; MDE 24/023/2006, 7 March 2006; MDE 24/029/2006, 31 March 2006; MDE 24/036/2006, 11 May 2006; MDE 24/059/2006, 3 October 2006; MDE 24/007/2007, 25 January 2007)  
- Fear of torture/incommunicado detention/prisoners of conscience

SYRIA                    Husam 'Ali Mulhim (m), aged 22, student  
                              Tarek Ghorani (m), aged 22, student  
                              Maher Ibrahim (m), aged 26, shop owner  
                              Ayham Saqr (m), aged around 31, works in a beauty salon  
                              'Alam Fakhour (m), aged around 29 (previously thought to be 26)  
                              'Omar 'Ali al-'Abdullah (m), aged around 22, student  
                              Diab Sirieyeh (m), aged around 22 (previously thought to be 26), part-time student

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The seven men named above were sentenced on 17 June to prison terms of either five or seven years, following an unfair trial before the Supreme State Security Court.

All were 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 Ibrahim and Tareq Ghorani were also convicted of "broadcasting of false news" under Article 287 of the Code: they were sentenced to seven years, while the others were sentenced to five years. An eighth man, 'Ali Nizar 'Ali, had been released under an amnesty on 28 December 2006.

They were arrested between 26 January and 18 March 2006 by the Air Force Intelligence (AFI) in Harasta, near Damascus, apparently for developing a youth discussion group and publishing pro-democracy articles on the internet. Around the end of April 2006, the men were moved from the AFI Branch to Sednaya prison on the outskirts of Damascus. During their trial in November 2006, all denied the charges and said that "confessions" had been extracted from them under torture while they were detained incommunicado. The court did not investigate these claims.

Amnesty International considers the seven men to be prisoners of conscience imprisoned solely for the peaceful expression of their legitimately held beliefs.

**No further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals. Amnesty International will continue to monitor the men's situation, and campaign on their behalf through other means.**