

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 13/091/2006

11 August 2006

**Further Information on UA 132/06 (MDE 24/037/2006, 15 May 2006 and MDE 24/041/2006, 2 June 2006)–
Forcible return/Fear of torture and ill-treatment**

IRAN/SYRIA Faleh 'Abdullah al-Mansuri (m), aged 60, President of the Ahwazi Liberation Organisation (ALO), Dutch national
Rasool Mezrea' (m), ALO member
Taher 'Ali Mezrea' (m), aged 40
Jamal 'Obeidawi (previously named as 'Abdawi / Obeidi) (m), aged 34, student and Chair of Ahwazi Student Union in Syria

Amnesty International has learnt that Iranian Arabs Faleh 'Abdullah al-Mansuri, Rasool (or 'Abdulrasool) Mezrea', Jamal 'Obeidawi (previously named in error as two people: Jamal 'Abdawi and Jamal Obeidi) and Taher 'Ali Mezrea' were reportedly forcibly returned to Iran from Syria on 16 May. It is believed that they are being held incommunicado at an unknown location in Iran, and may be at risk of torture, ill-treatment, and possibly execution.

The four were arrested by Political Security officers in the Syrian capital, Damascus, on 11 May, along with three other men, Musa Suwari, Ahmad 'Abd al-Jaber Abiat, and 'Issa Yassin al-Musawi. They were reportedly held incommunicado at an unknown location. According to reports, Musa Suwari, Ahmad 'Abd al-Jaber Abiat, and 'Issa Yassin al-Musawi were released between 11 May and 19 May.

Most of the men are said to have been recognised as refugees by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Faleh 'Abdullah al-Mansuri has since acquired Dutch nationality. His son, Adnan al-Mansuri, was reportedly informed of his father's forcible return to Iran by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 9 August. Returning refugees or any other individual to a country where they are at risk of torture or ill-treatment or other serious human rights abuses is a violation of Syria's obligations under international law, including the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, to which it is a state party.

There is no further information on Sa'id 'Awda al-Saki, an Iranian Arab and a recognized refugee, who was arrested at the same time as the men named above, and was reportedly forcibly returned to Iran on 14 May. He is now held incommunicado at an undisclosed location (see UA 150/06, MDE 13/054/2006, 26 May 2006).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Much of Iran's Arab community lives in the province of Khuzestan which borders Iraq. It is strategically important because it is the site of much of Iran's oil reserves, but the Arab population does not feel it has benefited as much from the oil revenue as the Persian population. Historically, the Arab community has been marginalised and discriminated against. Tension has mounted among the Arab population since April 2005, after it was alleged that the government planned to disperse the country's Arab population or to force them to relinquish their Arab identity. Hundreds have been arrested and there have been reports of torture. Following bomb explosions in Ahvaz City in June and October 2005, which killed at least 14 people, and explosions at oil installations in September and October, the cycle of violence has intensified, with hundreds of people reportedly arrested. Further bombings on 24 January 2006, in which at least six people were killed, were followed by further mass arrests. Two men, Mehdi Nawaseri and Ali Awdeh Afrawi, were executed in public on 2 March after they were convicted of involvement in the October bombings. Their executions followed unfair trials before a Revolutionary Court during which they are believed to have been denied access to lawyers, and their confessions, along with those of seven other men, were broadcast on television. At least 10 other Iranian Arabs are also reportedly under sentence of death, accused of involvement in the bombings,

distributing material against the state, having contact with dissident organizations operating abroad, and endangering state security. Amnesty International recognizes the right and responsibility of governments to bring to justice those suspected of criminal offences, but is unconditionally opposed to the death penalty as the ultimate violation of the right to life. Please see *Iran: Death Sentences appeal case – 11 Iranian Arab men facing death sentences*, AI Index MDE 13/051/2006, May 2006, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGMDE130512006?open&of=ENG-IRN>

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

To the Iranian authorities:

- expressing concern for the safety of Faleh 'Abdullah al-Mansuri, Rasool (or 'Abdulrasool) Mezrea', Jamal 'Obeidawi and Taher 'Ali Mezrea', who were forcibly returned to Iran from Syria on 16 May 2006;
- asking for the authorities to disclose the place of detention of the men, and given them immediate access to lawyers, their family, interpreters, and any medical treatment they may require;
- asking for details of any charges against them, and calling on the authorities to release them immediately unless they are to be promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- seeking assurances that they are not being tortured or ill-treated.

To the Syrian authorities:

- expressing grave concern that the Syrian authorities have forcibly returned four Iranian Arab activists, including recognized refugees, to Iran, where they would be at risk of torture, ill-treatment or the death penalty;
- expressing concern that this is in violation of Syria's obligations under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and contravenes the principle of *non-refoulement*, which prohibits the return in any manner whatsoever of any person to a situation where they would be at risk of torture, ill-treatment, or other serious human rights abuses;
- urging the Syrian authorities to request from the Iranian authorities information about the men's whereabouts and their wellbeing, and to make this information public.

APPEALS TO:

Iranian authorities:

Leader of the Islamic Republic

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei, The Office of the Supreme Leader, Shoahada Street, Qom, Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: + 98 251 774 2228 (mark "FAO the Office of His Excellency, Ayatollah al Udhma Khamenei")

Email: info@leader.ir OR istiftaa@wilayah.org

Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi

Ministry of Justice, Park-e Shahr, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email via website: <http://www.iranjudiciary.org/contactus-feedback-fa.html>

(Via the feedback form. The text of the feedback form translates as:

1st line: name; 2nd line: email address; 3rd line: subject heading. Type your message into the text box)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Syrian authorities:

President

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

Fax: + 963 11 332 3410

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of the Interior

His Excellency Major General Bassam Abdel Magid, Ministry of Interior, 'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar Street
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

Fax: + 963 11 2223428

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Iran and Syria accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 22 September 2006.