

PUBLIC

**AI Index: MDE 24/003/2008
10 January 2008**

Further Information on UA 333/07 (MDE 24/045/2007, 17 December 2007) and follow-ups (MDE 24/046/2007, 18 December 2007; MDE 24/002/2008, 7 January 2008) - Incommunicado detention/fear of torture or ill-treatment/possible prisoners of conscience

SYRIA

**Dr Feda'a al-Horani (f), aged 51, physician
Akram al-Bunni (m), aged 51, former prisoner of conscience, writer and political analyst
Ahmad To'meh (m), aged 51, dentist
Jabr al-Shoufi (m), aged 60, Arabic literature teacher
'Ali al-'Abdullah (m), aged 57, former prisoner of conscience and journalist
Dr Walid al-Bunni (m), aged 43, former prisoner of conscience and physician (no relation of Akram and Anwar al-Bunni)
Dr Yasser al-'Eiti (m), aged 39, physician and poet
Fayez Sarah (m), aged 58, writer and journalist**

New name: Muhammed Haji Darwish (m), aged 48

A ninth member of the group who attended the 1 December 2007 meeting of the leading pro-democracy umbrella grouping, the Declaration for Democratic National Change (DDDNC) has now been arrested. Muhammed Haji Darwish was arrested by State Security officials on 8 January. Like the other eight, he is held incommunicado without charge at the State Security branch in Damascus. All are at grave risk of torture. They appear to be prisoners of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression and association.

Muhammed Haji Darwish has been detained several times because of his activities as a peaceful advocate of political reform. He is a member of the unauthorised Syrian Democratic People's Party and was known until 2005 as the Syrian Communist Party (Political Bureau). He is also a member of an unauthorised pro-reform network of Syrian people engaging in political and human rights-related discussion.

The DDDNC is an unauthorised umbrella grouping of opposition and pro-democracy groups. The government began to crack down on the grouping on 9 December: 43 DDDNC members have been arrested so far, of whom 34 were released within a few days. None of the 43 is known to have been charged. It is not known why the nine people named above are still held. The authorities have given no reason.

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

- expressing concern that Muhammed Haji Darwish was arrested on 8 January;
- expressing concern that he and the other eight people (naming them) are held incommunicado, apparently on account of the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression and association;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee that the nine will not be tortured or ill-treated, and will be given immediate access to their relatives, lawyers and any medical treatment they may need;
- calling on the authorities to release them immediately and unconditionally if they are prisoners of conscience held solely for the peaceful expression of their opinions, or else bring them to trial promptly and fairly on recognizably criminal charges.

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

Minister of Foreign Affairs

His Excellency Walid Mu'allim
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
al-Rashid Street
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Fax: + 963 11 3327620
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 21 February 2008.