

PUBLIC

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Further information on UA 339/08 (MDE 24/036/2008, 11 December 2008) Fear of torture or other ill-treatment

SYRIA

Sa'dun Sheikhu (m), aged 43, Kurdish political activist
Mohammad Sai'd 'Omar (m), aged 53, Kurdish political activist

Kurdish political activists Sa'dun Sheikhu and Mohammad Sai'd 'Omar are now being detained at 'Adra prison in the capital, Damascus, where they are awaiting trial. They have been kept in incommunicado detention for almost four and a half months following their arrest by Military Intelligence officers on 25 October 2008.

According to sources in Syria, on 8 February 2009 Sa'dun Sheikhu and Mohammad Sai'd 'Omar were transferred to 'Adra prison from the Palestine Branch, an interrogation and detention centre in Damascus which is run by Military Intelligence and is infamous for torture. Reports from Syria suggest that neither man was tortured or otherwise ill-treated while in custody there, but that both were verbally insulted and intimidated. Sa'dun Sheikhu and Mohammad Sai'd 'Omar have twice been allowed to meet their families and lawyers, on 10 February and 17 February, but were unable to hold private conversations with them because of the presence of prison guards.

On 10 February, the Public Prosecutor charged both men with "weakening national sentiments" (under Article 285 of the Syrian Penal Code), establishing an "organization with the aim of changing the financial or social status of the state" (Article 306) and "inciting sectarian strife" (Article 307). It is believed that both men have been detained because of their peaceful activities as senior members of a Kurdish political party, the Kurdish Azadi (Freedom) Party in Syria.

Amnesty International considers that Sa'dun Sheikhu and Mohammad Sai'd 'Omar are no longer at risk of torture or other ill-treatment. However, the organization will continue to follow their cases closely.

Thank you to all who sent appeals. No further action is needed.