

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 03/07 (MDE 24/002/2007, 5 January 2007) Fear of torture and other ill-treatment/incommunicado detention/possible prisoner of conscience

SYRIA Muhi al-Din Sheikh Aali (m), aged around 53, Secretary of the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Unity Party (or Yeketi Party)

Kurdish activist Muhi al-Din Sheikh Aali (previously given as A'ali) was released on 16 February from a Political Security detention centre in Damascus. He had been held incommunicado for almost two months.

Muhi al-Din Sheikh Aali was arrested by Military Intelligence on 20 December 2006 while he was in a café in Aleppo in northern Syria. He was held by Military Intelligence for three or four days, before being transferred to a detention centre under the jurisdiction of Political Security. He was kept in solitary confinement throughout his detention. He was finally allowed to receive a visit from his brother about four days before his release. The Political Security officer supervising their meeting forbade them from speaking in their own language, Kurdish.

Amnesty International believes that Muhi al-Din Sheikh Aali was detained as a prisoner of conscience solely for the peaceful expression of his legitimately held beliefs. He is the Secretary of the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Unity Party, which, like most opposition parties in Syria, is banned by the authorities.

Thanks to all those who sent appeals on this case. No further action is required. Amnesty International will continue to monitor this case.