

URGENT ACTION



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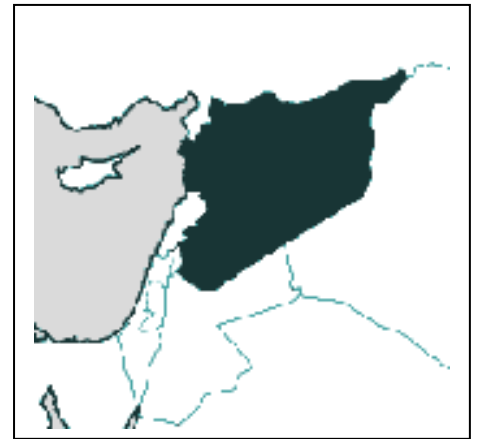
11 December 2008

UA 339/08 Fear of torture or other ill-treatment/Possible prisoners of conscience

SYRIA Sa'dun Sheikhu (m)] Kurdish political activists
Mohammad Sai'd 'Omar (m)]

Kurdish political activists Sa'dun Sheikhu and Mohammad Sai'd 'Omar were arrested on 25 October and have since been held incommunicado. They are in serious danger of torture. Amnesty International believes they may be prisoners of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association.

The two men are believed to have been detained because of their peaceful activities as senior members of a Kurdish political party, the Kurdish Azadi (Freedom) Party in Syria. Only the ruling Baath Party and parties allied to it are officially allowed to operate in Syria and supporters of unauthorized opposition parties are at constant risk of arrest.



The two men were arrested by Military Security officers, who raided their homes in the north-eastern cities of Ras al-'Ayn and Rameilan. In mid-November their families and associates found out that they were in a detention center in the north-western city of Aleppo, about 500km from their homes. They are now known to have been moved to the Military Intelligence's Far' Falastin detention center in Damascus, which is notorious for torture.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Kurds in Syria suffer severe discrimination because of their ethnicity; many of them are denied Syrian nationality and cannot receive the full provision of education, employment, health care and other rights enjoyed by Syrian nationals. Kurdish human rights defenders and civil society activists, and those deemed to be associated with Kurdish political parties or groups who raise concerns about the treatment of Kurds in Syria, are particularly at risk of arbitrary arrest and, in many cases, torture.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:

- calling on the authorities to release Sa'dun Sheikhu and Mohammad Sai'd 'Omar immediately unless they are to be charged with a recognizably criminal offense;
- expressing concern that Sa'dun Sheikhu and Mohammad Sai'd 'Omar are detained incommunicado, putting them at risk of torture;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee that Sa'dun Sheikhu and Mohammad Sai'd 'Omar will not be tortured or otherwise ill-treated, and reminding them that Syria is a state party to the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;
- urging the authorities to allow Sa'dun Sheikhu and Mohammad Sai'd 'Omar visits from their families immediately, and also access to a lawyer of their own choosing and any medical attention they may require;

Amnesty International's mission is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights.

- expressing concern that Sa'dun Sheikhu and Mohammad Sai'd 'Omar may be prisoners of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful expression of their rights to freedom of expression and association.

APPEALS TO:

President

His Excellency Bashar al-Assad
Presidential Palace
al-Rashid Street
Damascus, SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

Fax: 011 963 11 332 3410

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Interior

His Excellency Major General Bassam Abdel Majid
Ministry of Interior
'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar Street
Damascus, SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

Fax: 011 963 11 2223428

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice

His Excellency Muhammad al-Ghafari
Ministry of Justice
Al-Nasr Street, Damascus, SYRIAN ARAB
REPUBLIC

Fax: 011 963 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: 011 963 11 3327620

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

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2215 Wyoming Ave. NW
Washington DC 20008

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PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.

Check with the AIUSA Urgent Action office if sending appeals after 22 January 2009.