



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, USA

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NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10001

MR STEVEN S ABERN
2128 SUTTER STREET
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94115

DEAR MR ABERN,

I urge you to sign and mail the letter I've enclosed to Hafez al-Assad.

Assad is the President of Syria. And your signed letter urges him to look into the circumstances of Riad al-Turk's imprisonment and to release him from jail.

What I'm asking you to do is neither impractical nor overly idealistic. I'm simply asking you to help me decide the fate of one lonely man.

Riad is a 58-year-old lawyer and First Secretary of the prohibited Communist Party Political Bureau. He lived in Damascus with his wife and children. But on October 28, 1980, he was arrested by the Syrian security police and has since been held without charges or trial. He has not been allowed to see his wife or children nor to send or receive letters.

It is known that Riad has been tortured on at least four separate occasions. In 1981, he was tortured and sent to a hospital to recover. A year later, he was readmitted for intensive care. Then in 1983, Riad was severely tortured and almost died. And in 1984, his arm and leg were broken. Today, he is thought to be held at the Military Interrogation Center in Damascus.

It's vital you mail your Urgent Action Letter to the President of Syria and urge him to release Riad al-Turk.

Then, please sign your Confirmation Copy and return it to me in the brown postage-free envelope I've enclosed.

It's important that I know you have mailed your letter so I'll have an accurate count of the letters sent to President Assad.

But tragically, the case of Riad is not an isolated example of a government's abuse of human life and dignity.

Torture and political detention are everyday events in

more than 1/3 of the world's governments.

The burning of flesh with cigarettes, electric shock, a year or more blindfolded in total darkness, and being stretched and broken on the rack are the living nightmares suffered by prisoners of conscience in jail cells, torture chambers and slave labor camps around the world.

I know these details are hard to read and I'm not telling you this to be morbid or to shock you. But I am saying it to urge you to sign and mail the letter I've enclosed to President Assad.

Because your signed letter could literally be the difference between life and death for Riad al-Turk.

Because it's ordinary people like you and me -- not governments -- who have the power to stop torture.

Even the most cruel governments take notice when caring people around the world expose their human rights violations.

Officials must then ask themselves, "Is this prisoner worth all this negative publicity? Is keeping this individual in jail or torturing this person worth all the trouble it's causing?"

Even the most tyrannical governments don't want to appear repressive. Their diplomats still have to negotiate with other countries and their ships must dock in foreign ports.

I know governments have these concerns and I know they do in fact release prisoners of conscience on whose behalf we have fought.

One of our most effective weapons against torture is our Urgent Action Network -- a highly organized system of concerned people who have agreed to send immediate Urgent Action letters on behalf of tortured prisoners.

In fact, one of every three Urgent Action cases results in the release of the prisoner or some improvement in the prisoner's condition. And in all cases, the danger of continued torture is lessened.

A freed Paraguayan prisoner aided by Amnesty wrote: "On Christmas Eve, the door to my cell opened and the guard tossed in a crumpled piece of paper. It said, 'Take heart. The world knows you are alive. We're with you.' That letter saved my life."

A released prisoner from Malaysia wrote about the letters he received while in prison. "It is hard

to describe the feelings in my heart -- these [letters] I regarded as precious jewels."

But, Amnesty International does much more. We were established in 1961 to work impartially for the victims of human rights violations.

Our work is on behalf of "prisoners of conscience" -- men, women and children imprisoned for their beliefs, color, sex, ethnic origin, language or religion -- who have never used or advocated violence. We fight to end torture and executions -- and to ensure fair and prompt trials.

And we are the only organization of our type to win the Nobel Prize for Peace.

We have pressured offending governments for a change through our consultative status with the United Nations, the Council of Europe, and through cooperative relations with government bodies in Africa and Latin America.

Within the United States, we have an expanding network of legal, medical and political experts. We meet with members of Congress to urge them to consider human rights issues when making foreign policy.

And Amnesty International works closely with business, labor and political leaders to gain their cooperation in our fight against torture.

We disagree with those who say torture is a regrettable, but incurable, disease. Like slavery, torture can and will be ended with your support.

Prisoners can be freed. And lives can be saved through your direct action with Amnesty International.

But, your support is desperately needed. Even as I write you, innocent victims are being imprisoned, tortured and forced to suffer unspeakable mental and physical agonies.

In Vietnam, a prominent poet, Hoang Cam, is in prison for attempting to deliver a collection of unpublished poems to the United States.

In Chile, Ricardo Weibel Navarrette -- abducted from his home in 1975 -- is among 650 Chileans who disappeared between 1973 and 1977 and whose fate has never been acknowledged by Chilean officials.

Now, it's up to you and me to help free these prisoners of conscience around the world. But, as I promised you at the start of my letter, I'm not going to

ask you to do anything difficult or unrealistic.

I'm only asking you to help me decide the fate of one man -- Riad al-Turk -- by mailing your letter to President Assad.

Then complete your "Confirmation Copy" and return it to me in the brown, postage-free envelope. It's important that I know you have mailed your letter.

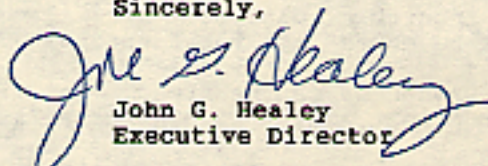
And at the same time, I urge you to join Amnesty International's fight by including your tax-deductible Membership contribution of \$15, \$25, \$50 or more.

In return for your Membership contribution, you'll receive our regular newspaper, Amnesty Action, which will keep you up to date on our efforts to free prisoners and abolish torture. But most importantly, you'll be part of our world-wide effort to end government's abuse of power and human rights.

Riad and other prisoners of conscience being held and tortured are flesh and blood people who need your help. Their pain and suffering are real. Without your support, they have little hope.

Please sign and mail your letter to President Assad. And return your signed Confirmation Copy with your Membership contribution of \$15, \$25, \$50 or more to me today.

Sincerely,



John G. Healey
Executive Director

P.S. Your letter to President Assad can play a deciding role in our fight against the torture and imprisonment of Riad al-Turk. Please sign your Confirmation Copy and return it to me today with your tax-deductible contribution of \$15, \$25, \$50 or more. I've enclosed a postage-free envelope to speed your reply.

Here's what one freed prisoner told us about the effect of our Urgent Action Letters. Perhaps your letter on behalf of Riad al-Turk will achieve the same result.

"When the first 200 letters (from Amnesty) came, the guard gave me back my clothes. Then the next 200 letters kept coming. The President called the prison and told them to let me go."