



Press Statement

**Sean McCormack, Spokesman**

Washington, DC

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## Syria: Arrest of Reformers

The Syrian regime's ongoing crackdown on Syrian civil society activists is a cause for great concern to the United States . The arrests of human rights lawyer Anwar al-Bunni and opposition activist Michel Kilo are merely the latest examples of Syria's blatant abuse of the rights of those would peacefully seek to express their views. From arresting activists such as Kilo, al-Bunni, Mahmoud Mur'i, Nidal Darwish, Khalil Hussein, and Suleiman al-Shummar, to putting Ali and Mohammed Abdullah, Fateh Jammous, and Kamal Labwani on trial on political grounds, the Syrian government continues to implement domestic policies which distance it from the rest of international community. Arrests without warrant and sentences without evidence are not acceptable means of addressing political dissent.

We continue to call for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners in Syria . As the Secretary stated on March 24, 2006, "t he United States is disturbed by a clear pattern of increased repression by the Syrian government of democracy and human rights activists. The United States deplores the atmosphere of fear being fostered by the Syrian authorities. We call upon the Government of Syria to cease its harassment of Syrians who seek to defend their rights and to bring democratic change to their country."

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