



U.S. DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

Press Statement

Sean McCormack, Spokesman

Washington, DC

March 29, 2007

Release Political Prisoners and Open Political Discourse in Syria

We deplore arbitrary arrest and detention of political prisoners by the Syrian government. We are concerned about the cases of Syrian political prisoners Anwar al-Bunni and Kamal Labwani, who are being tried in criminal court for expressing their opinions. We join others in calling on the Syrian government to immediately and unconditionally release them and other prisoners of conscience, including Mahmoud Issa and Michel Kilo. The continued use of arbitrary arrests and detentions of its opponents demonstrates the Syrian regime's contempt for accepted international human rights standards.

Open political discourse where people do not fear imprisonment simply for expressing their views is an essential element of democracy. The United States stands with the Syrian people in their struggle for universal freedoms and calls on the Syrian government to end its abusive practices.

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Released on March 29, 2007

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Published by the U.S. Department of State Website at <http://www.state.gov> maintained by the Bureau of Public Affairs.