

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1605/06

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to the Council

Subject: Syria: peaceful activist Kamal al-Labwani arrested on return to Damascus

Former Syrian prisoner of conscience and founder of the Liberal Democratic Union in Syria Kamal al-Labwani was arrested on 8 November 2005 on arrival at Damascus airport, to where he had returned after spending several months in Europe and the USA. His arrest seems connected with his peaceful calls for democratic reform in Syria and Parliament is calling for his release.

According to media reports from the region, the Syrian authorities have levelled this month new charges at Labwani that could carry a life sentence (with hard labour) or even the death penalty, if the authorities adopt a hardline stance. According to Anwar Bunni, the charge is that Kamal al -Labwani has 'contacted a foreign state to get it to initiate aggression against Syria'. This charge carries the sentences listed above. Mr al Labwani never advocated the use of force against Syria. On the contrary he recommended dialogue and support to civil society and opposition forces to facilitate a non-violent transition towards democracy.

Is the Council ready to raise this case during its next meetings with the Syrian authorities?