

TAKE ACTION: Please cut and paste this letter onto your personal or Institutional letterhead calling for the release from prison of writer Michel Kilo.

18 May 2007

His Excellency President Bashar al-Assad
President of the Republic
Presidential Palace
Abu Rummaneh, Al-Rashid Street
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Fax: + 963 11 332 3410

Excellency,

I wish to add my name to this appeal from PEN Canada, the Canadian centre of the international writers' organization, International PEN. PEN Canada is writing to protest the three-year prison sentence handed down to writer **Michel Kilo** on 13 May 2007 for his dissident writings and pro-reform activities.

According to PEN's information, prominent writer and journalist Michel Kilo, who contributes to the leading Lebanese daily *Al-Nahar* and the London-based Arabic-language daily *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, was first arrested on 14 May 2006. He is among 10 Syrian civil society activists to have been arrested between 14 and 18 May for signing the "Beirut-Damascus Declaration" of 12 May 2006 calling for the establishment of diplomatic relations between Lebanon and Syria based on respect for each country's sovereignty. Several hundred Syrian and Lebanese nationals signed the agreement. These arrests appear to be part of a renewed crackdown on government opponents in recent months, where scores have been arrested for their peaceful opposition activities.

Michel Kilo was issued a provisional release order by a judge on 19 October 2006, but his release was obstructed by new charges filed by the prosecution on 23 October 2006. He was convicted by the Damascus Criminal Court on 13 May 2007 on charges of "spreading false news, weakening national feeling and inciting sectarian sentiments" for his dissident writings and pro-reform activities. Michel Kilo has been subject to persistent harassment by the Syrian authorities over the years as a result of his work in support of democratic rights.

Michel Kilo is detained at 'Adra prison near Damascus, where he said to be treated well and granted full access to his family.

PEN Canada protests the three-year prison sentence handed down to writer Michel Kilo on 13 May 2007 solely for his dissident writings and pro-reform activities. PEN Canada objects to the detention of all writers in Syria for expressing their views including Michel Kilo, and is calling for their immediate and unconditional release in accordance with Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Syria is a signatory.

Sincerely,

[Your name and address]

Appeals to:

His Excellency General Ghazi Kan'an
Minister of Interior, Ministry of Interior

Merjeh Circle
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Fax: + 963 11 222 3428
Email: admin@civilaffair-moi.gov.sy

Embassy of the Syrian Arab Republic
151 Slater Street
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Fax: +1 613 569 3800
E-mail: ambassador@syrianembassy.ca, info@syrianembassy.ca

Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations
820 Second Avenue, 15th Floor
New York, NY 10017
Fax: +1 212 983 4439
E-mail: Syria@un.int

Please send copies of your appeal to the following Canadian authorities:

The Hon. Peter MacKay
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Lester B. Pearson Building, Room A-10
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa ON K1A 0G2
Fax: (613) 996 3443
E-mail: peter.mackay@international.gc.ca

Peter Harder
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