

URGENT ACTION

BERZANI KARRO JAILED

Syrian Kurd Berzani Karro, who was tortured in custody, has been sentenced to two-and-a-half years' imprisonment for "attempting to sever part of the Syrian territory and annex it to a foreign state."

Berzani Karro was brought before a military court on 14 March, and sentenced to five years' imprisonment, immediately commuted to two-and-a-half years. He intends to appeal, though such appeals are rarely successful.

According to sources in Syria, Berzani Karro was beaten for hours at a time while he was detained incommunicado for interrogation, between June and September 2009. He was held in al-Fayha Political Security Branch in the capital, Damascus. He is now allowed regular visits from his family and has had access to his lawyer.

Berzani Karro was convicted on charges commonly used against Kurds who appear to be politically active and critical of the state. He has now been imprisoned on the basis of his presumed political opinions. He was tried by a military court, whose procedures are known to fall short of international standards. Military courts are known to accept "confessions" as evidence, even when defendants say they made them under torture.

Berzani Karro had been forcibly returned from Cyprus, and arrested on arrival at Damascus Airport on 27 June 2009. He had applied for asylum in Cyprus, but been rejected, and this was the justification used for returning him. Cypriot officials escorted him on the plane, and handed him over to the Syrian authorities at Damascus airport.

No further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals. We will continue to monitor Berzani Karro's situation, and take further campaigning action as necessary.

This is the second update of UA 257/09. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/024/2009/en>

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**

