

# URGENT ACTION

## FATHER AND SON HELD INCOMMUNICADO IN SYRIA

**Medical student Sameeh Bahrah, aged 26, has been held incommunicado at an unknown location, since his arrest on 30 April 2013. The same day, his father Bassam Bahrah, aged 52, also went missing. They may have been subjected to enforced disappearance.**

Medical student **Sameeh Bahrah**, aged 26, was arrested at his family home in the al-Mezzeh district of Damascus on 30 April 2013. Eyewitnesses from the neighbourhood informed a member of Sameeh Bahrah's family that on the evening of 30 April, he was arrested by two men, wearing official uniforms, and who appeared in security vans. It is unknown which government security service the men worked for.

**Bassam Bahrah**, aged 52 and Sameeh Bahrah's father, was last seen around 2pm of the same day when he left the al-Mezzeh Military Hospital where he works as a civilian employee. Sameeh Bahrah reportedly made repeated attempts to call his father that afternoon and finally connected with him at 4pm. Bassam Bahrah is reported to have answered his phone and informed his son that he would be home soon.

According to the family, however, Bassam Bahrah is yet to be seen. The family suspects that Bassam Bahrah was arrested to lead the authorities to Sameeh Bahrah's location. They also believe that Sameeh Bahrah is wanted for his peaceful political activities as he had been detained for this reason twice before.

If this is the case, Amnesty International would consider both men as prisoners of conscience with Sameeh Bahrah detained solely for legitimately exercising his rights to freedom of expression and association and Bassam Bahrah apparently detained solely on account of his family relationship with his son.

### **Please write immediately in Arabic, English or your own language:**

- Urge the Syrian authorities to reveal Sameeh Bahrah and Bassam Bahrah's whereabouts and fate, grant them immediate access to their family and lawyer and ensure that they are protected from torture or other ill-treatment and given all necessary medical care;
- Ask for clarification of Sameeh Bahrah and Bassam Bahrah's legal status; if Sameeh Bahrah is held solely for the peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and assembly and if Bassam Bahrah is held solely on account of his relationship to his son, then they should be released immediately and unconditionally as they would be prisoners of conscience.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 1 JULY 2013 TO:**

#### President

Bashar al-Assad

Fax: +963 11 332 3410 (keep trying;  
fax/phone line – say "Fax"; Fax is the  
only reliable communication method;  
please do not send letters)

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

#### Minister of Interior

Major General Mohamad Ibrahim al-  
Shaar

Fax: +963 11 311 0554  
(keep trying; fax/phone line – say "Fax";  
Fax is the only reliable communication  
method; please do not send letters)

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

#### Minister of Defence

Brigadier General Fahd Jassem al-Frej

Fax: +963 11 223 7842;  
+963 11 666 2460 (keep trying;  
fax/phone line – say "Fax"; Fax is the  
only reliable communication method;  
please do not send letters)

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.**

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

According to Sameeh Bahrah's family, he is a peaceful political activist. He was first arrested in July 2012 apparently for his participation in a protest in the al-Midan district of the capital, Damascus, and was kept incommunicado for 22 days in the Palestine Branch in Damascus, a Military Intelligence run detention centre notorious for torture. A few months after his release he was arrested again after taking part in a demonstration in the al-'Amarah district and was kept for four days by one of Syria's intelligence branches.

Bassam Bahrah is not a political activist, as far as Amnesty International is aware. He suffers from diabetes and high blood pressure, for which he requires daily medication.

Since the outbreak of the Syrian uprising in mid-March 2011, government forces have indiscriminately killed or targeted civilians during air or artillery strikes, carried out extrajudicial executions and arrested thousands of individuals, many of whom have been subjected to torture or other ill-treatment. The eight general amnesties issued so far have left thousands held. The most recent on 16 April 2013 focused on all those imprisoned for offences committed before that date. Up to 7,000 inmates were expected to benefit from this measure. Yet, similarly to previous general amnesties, the most recent one excludes thousands of individuals detained incommunicado and without charge, often in conditions that amount to enforced disappearance. Some are prisoners of conscience. Many have been held without charge for months; others may be facing charges under the 2012 Anti-Terrorism Law or the Penal Code. They include cases of activists, lawyers and aid workers, some of whom were children when arrested. For an insight into the widespread torture and other ill-treatment in Syria's detention centres, please see *I wanted to die: Syria's torture survivors speak out*, March 2012 (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/016/2012/en>).

Amnesty International has received the names of over 1,000 individuals believed to have died in the custody of the Syrian security forces since the beginning of the unrest. Amnesty International documented this practice in August 2011: *Deadly detention: Deaths in custody amid popular protest in Syria* (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/035/2011/en>).

Although the vast majority of the human rights abuses documented by Amnesty International have been committed by the state's armed forces and pro-government *shabiha* militias, abuses have also been committed by armed opposition groups. This includes the torture and killing of captured members of the security forces and *shabiha* militia members as well as the abduction and killing of people known or suspected to support or work with the government and its forces, or the taking of civilians as hostages to try to negotiate prisoner swaps. Amnesty International condemns without reservation such abuses and has called on the leadership of all armed opposition groups in Syria to state publicly that such acts are prohibited and to do all in their power to ensure that opposition forces put an immediate stop to them. See *Syria: Summary killings and other abuses by armed opposition groups* (MDE 24/008/2013), 14 March 2013. <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE24/008/2013/en/8d527c4e-2aff-4311-bad8-d63dbc97c96a/mde240082013en.html>.

Name: Sameeh Bahrah and Bassam Bahrah  
Gender m/f: both m

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