

URGENT ACTION

SYRIAN KURD DISAPPEARS, RISKS TORTURE

A Syrian Kurdish man has been forcibly returned to Syria from Cyprus. He was detained on arrival, and has not been seen since: he has been subjected to enforced disappearance and is in grave danger of torture.

Berzani Karro, who is 20, is now known to have been arrested at Damascus airport on 27 June. His father has since made numerous inquiries with the Syrian authorities about his son's fate and whereabouts, including at a number of detention centres and prisons around the country, but they have denied holding him in their custody. One State Security officer in the predominantly Kurdish north-eastern town where he lives, Amouda, told his father that his family name alone was enough to have led to him being arrested: an uncle with the same family name is a prominent member of the outlawed Kurdish Left Party of Syria (al-Hizb al-Yasari al-Kurdi fi Suria), and now lives in exile in Sweden.

Berzani Karro had left Syria in October 2006 and travelled to Cyprus, where he applied for asylum. His application was rejected and he was arrested in September 2008, on the grounds that he had no legal right to remain in the country. He was detained in Larnaca prison until he was returned to Syria. Cypriot officials escorted him on the plane, and handed him over to the Syrian authorities at Damascus airport. They first allowed him to make one phone call to his family, in which he told them he was about to be taken to the al-Fayha Political Security Branch in Damascus. Political Security is one of several branches of the security forces operating in Syria, all of which regularly detain individuals on even the slightest suspicion of opposition to the regime. Kurds in Syria are particularly vulnerable to prolonged arbitrary detention as well as torture and other ill-treatment.

Berzani Karro had been arrested in Amouda on 15 January 2005, when he was 15. He was held for around two and a half months, for at least some of the time in the Military Intelligence-run Palestine Branch detention centre, where detainees are regularly tortured. He was accused of attending an unauthorized demonstration and destroying state property, including a statue of the president. His family say he was at home at the time of the protest. At the Palestine Branch, he was subjected to the *dulab* (the tyre), whereby he was forced through a car tyre suspended from the ceiling and beaten. There were 10 others detained with him, all of them under 18.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Arabic, English, French or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to reveal immediately Berzani Karro's fate and whereabouts;
- Calling on them to release him without delay unless he is to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- Urging them to ensure that he is protected from torture or other ill-treatment, is held in an official place of detention and allowed visits from his family, a lawyer of his choosing and any medical attention he may require.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 6 NOVEMBER 2009 TO:

President

Bashar al-Assad
 Presidential Palace
 Al-Rashid Street
 Damascus
 Syrian Arab Republic
Fax: + 963 11 332 3410
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Defence

Lieutenant-General Ali Ben-Mohammed
 Habib Mahmoud
 Ministry of Defence
 Omayyad Square
 Damascus
 Syrian Arab Republic
Fax: + 963 11 211 9729 / 223 7842
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Minister of Interior

Major Sa'id Mohammed Sammour
 'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar Street
 Damascus
 Syrian Arab Republic
Fax: + 963 11 222 3428
Email: somi@net.sy
Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives of Syria accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
 INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Those deemed to be in any way associated with Kurdish political parties or groups that raise concerns about the treatment of Kurds in Syria are vulnerable to arbitrary arrest and detention and in many cases to torture or other ill-treatment. In addition, the authorities impose heavy restrictions on the production and circulation of Kurdish literature, including books and music. Many Kurds are denied the full provision of education, employment and health care, as well as the right to use their own language in schools and other public places.

Cyprus has signed the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, which requires that no one shall be "expelled or returned... in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion."

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