

URGENT ACTION

KURDISH LAWYER DETAINED, RISKS TORTURE

Kurdish lawyer Mustafa Ismail was detained on 12 December, and has been held incommunicado since then. He is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

Mustafa Ismail, who writes about the treatment of Kurds in Syria and Turkey for a number of foreign-based websites, was detained when he went to the Air Force Security Branch in the northern city of Aleppo, in response to an order from the local security office in his home town of Ain Arab. His family went to the same Air Force Security Branch on 17 December to find out what had happened to him, but they were told that he was not there and they were ordered to leave.

The day before he was detained Mustafa Ismail had posted an article on the London-based *Levant News* website, in which he said he had been ordered to go to the Air Force Security Branch in Aleppo, commenting that he could "easily get into the Guinness Book of Records" because of the number of times that he had been summoned to report to security offices since 2000.

He had recently been questioned by officials of several different security services: the Political Security Branch on 3 October, the Military Security Branch on 5 October and the State Security Branch on 7 and 8 November. He told colleagues that the questioning on these occasions had focused on his media work, especially phone interviews he had given to a European-based Kurdish satellite TV station, Roj TV.

As yet, the Syrian authorities have not acknowledged that he is in detention or provided any explanation, prompting feaRS that he could be subject to torture or other ill-treatment.

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

- Expressing concern that Mustafa Ismail has been held incommunicado at an unknown location since 12 December, putting him at risk of torture and other ill-treatment;
- Calling on the authorities to ensure that he is not tortured or otherwise ill-treated, and reminding them that Syria is a state party to the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;
- Urging them to allow him, immediately, visits from his family, a lawyer of his choosing, and any medical attention he may require;
- Calling on them to release Mustafa Ismail unless he is to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and tried promptly in proceedings which meet international fair trial standards.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 7 JANUARY 2010 TO:

President

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

Minister of Interior

Major Sa'id Mohamed Samour
 Ministry of Interior
 'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar Street
 Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Fax: +963 11 222 3428
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Walid al-Mu'allim
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 al-Rashid Street
 Damascus
 Syrian Arab Republic
Fax: +963 11 332 7620
Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives 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

Syria's Emergency Law, in place since 1963, has allowed the establishment of multiple security agencies with sweeping powers to arrest and detain anyone perceived as opposing the government. Torture and other ill-treatment are widespread in Syria's detention and interrogation centres. In 2009, at least seven people are reported to have died in custody as a result of abuse. The authorities have taken no action to investigate these allegations.

"Confessions" extracted under duress are systematically used as evidence in Syrian courts, and defendants' claims that they have been tortured or otherwise ill-treated are almost never investigated.

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