

URGENT ACTION

FEARS FOR TURKISH JOURNALISTS IN SYRIA

Turkish journalists Adem Özköse and Hamit Coşkun went missing while reporting on current events in northern Syria. They were in Syria, close to the Turkish border, on 10 March when they last made contact with colleagues. It is believed that they have been subjected to enforced disappearance, putting them at risk of torture and ill-treatment.

Adem Özköse, a 34-year-old reporter and **Hamit Coşkun**, a 21-year-old cameraman, entered Syria from the Turkish border on 5 March 2012. According to a colleague, they had intended to spend a week in the northern region of Syria in order to cover current events. They last made contact with colleagues from the northern town of Idlib on 10 March 2012 and told them they were covering a demonstration. Their fate and whereabouts since then are unclear.

Syrian news reports have mentioned that both men are in the custody of the Syrian security forces; however, the Syrian authorities have not released any official information about the men. A spokesperson from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs has informed Amnesty International that the Ministry has written to the Syrian authorities to obtain information about the men and call for their release if they have been arrested; however, the Syrian government has not yet officially responded to these requests, as far as Amnesty International is aware.

Due to the lack of information about the whereabouts of the men, it is believed that they are being held in conditions amounting to enforced disappearance and thus they are at grave risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

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

- Calling on the Syrian authorities to immediately reveal the fate and whereabouts of Adem Özköse and Hamit Coşkun;
- Demanding that, if the two men are currently in the custody of the Syrian authorities, they should be released and allowed to return to Turkey immediately.
- In the meantime, if held, they should be protected from all forms of torture and other ill-treatment

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 8 MAY 2012 TO:

President

Bashar al-Assad
 Presidential Palace, al-Rashid Street
 Damascus,
 Syrian Arab Republic
 Fax: +963 11 332 3410 (keep trying)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Interior

His Excellency Major General Mohamad
 Ibrahim al-Shaar, Ministry of Interior,
 'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar Street
 Damascus,
 Syrian Arab Republic
 Fax: +963 11 211 9578 (keep trying)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Walid al-Mu'allim
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 al-Rashid Street
 Damascus,
 Syrian Arab Republic
 Fax: +963 11 214 6253 (keep trying)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
 INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Pro-reform demonstrations began in Syria in February 2011 and evolved into mass protests in mid-March 2011. The Syrian authorities have responded in the most brutal manner in their efforts to suppress them. Amnesty International has obtained the names of more than 7,200 people reported to have died or been killed during, or in connection with, the protests and unrest. Many are believed to have been shot by security forces using live ammunition while taking part in peaceful protests or attending funerals of people killed in protests. More recently, hundreds have been killed during the shelling of civilian areas by Syrian armed forces, particularly in the city of Homs. Members of the security forces have also been killed, some by defecting soldiers and others who have taken up arms against the government.

The Syrian state has a number of security and intelligence agencies, as well as other, more opaque, groups. They are often armed but not necessarily uniformed. These groups carry out abductions, killings and other abuses in apparent coordination with, or at least approval of, state officials. Amnesty International has also received reports of armed individuals threatening, abusing, kidnapping, or, in some cases, killing people perceived to be linked to or supportive of the state.

Thousands of suspected opponents of the Syrian government have been arrested in the past 12 months and many, if not most, are believed to have been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment. Amnesty International has the names of more than 280 people reported to have died in custody in this period and has documented many cases of torture or other ill-treatment of former detainees. For further information about torture and other ill-treatment of detainees in Syria, see "*I wanted to die*": Syria's torture survivors speak out <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/016/2012/en>. Amnesty International has also received many reports of individuals apparently subjected to enforced disappearance, where state officials have failed to provide families with any information concerning the fate of individuals, most of whom are believed to have been arrested by security forces.

Access for international journalists to the country has been very limited since the start of the unrest. Similarly, independent international human rights organisations and monitors, such as Amnesty International or the independent international Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (set up by United Nations Human Rights Council), have not been permitted to enter Syria to document human rights violations or abuses by either side.

Despite being denied access to the country since the outbreak of the unrest, Amnesty International has documented systematic and widespread human rights violations which amount to crimes against humanity, and has called since April 2011 for the situation in Syria to be referred to the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, as well as for imposition of a comprehensive arms embargo and an assets freeze on Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and those close to him. For further information, please see Amnesty International reports: *Crackdown in Syria: Terror in Tell Kalakh*, Index: MDE 24/029/2011, July 2011, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/029/2011/en>; *Deadly detention: deaths in custody amid popular protest in Syria*, Index: MDE 24/035/2011, 31 August 2011, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/035/2011/en>; or *Health crisis: Syrian government targets the wounded and health workers*, Index: MDE 24/059/2011, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/059/2011/en>.

Name: Adem Özköse and Hamit Coşkun
Gender m/f: Both male

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