

# URGENT ACTION

## TURKISH JOURNALISTS DETAINED IN SYRIA

**Turkish journalists Adem Özköse and Hamit Coşkun continue to be detained following their capture by *Shabiha* members (armed gangs supporting the Syrian authorities) in northern Syria on or around 10 March. They are currently believed to be held at a State Security branch in Damascus and may have been tortured.**

**Adem Özköse**, a 34-year-old reporter and **Hamit Coşkun**, a 21-year-old cameraman, entered Syria across the border with Turkey on 5 March 2012. Their last contact with colleagues was from the northern town of Idlib on 10 March. Their families had no contact with them until 5 May 2012, when a delegation from the Turkish humanitarian organization İnsani Yardım Vakfı (IHH) saw them in an unidentified detention facility in Damascus. During this visit, they were each allowed to make one short phone call to a family member in the presence of the delegation and security forces. Since then, they have been returned to incommunicado detention.

Their current whereabouts are unknown. However, information received by Amnesty International suggests that in early May 2012 they were being held at branch 285 of the Syrian State Security in Damascus where they are reported to have been tortured or otherwise ill-treated when first taken there. According to a contact within IHH, both men appeared to be in good physical condition during their meeting, without obvious injuries. However, Amnesty International was also informed that the detention conditions were poor and both men were held in solitary confinement.

According to information Amnesty International has obtained, both men and their Syrian driver were captured in Kafria, a village near Idlib, by armed *Shabiha* members and held in a house there. They were then moved to another village, Fu'a, where they were moved around different houses until 18 March 2012, when they were taken to an unknown location. The reasons for their detention remain unknown.

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

- Urging the Syrian authorities to release Adem Özköse and Hamit Coşkun immediately and unconditionally if they are held solely on account of their professional journalistic activities. If they are held for having entered the country illegally, they should be released and allowed to return to Turkey immediately;
- In the meantime, they should be protected from all forms of torture and other ill-treatment and be allowed to have regular access to their families and lawyers of their choice.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 22 JUNE 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**

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

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the second update of UA 82/12. Further information:  
<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/031/2012/en>

**AMNESTY  
 INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The photos as well as a video of the two men during their meeting with the IHH delegation can be found here:  
<http://www.ihh.org.tr/kayip-gazetecilerden-57-gun-sonra-ilk-goruntuler/en/>

Pro-reform demonstrations in Syria began sporadically in February 2011 but became larger and more frequent after the first killings of demonstrators the following month. Initially largely peaceful, the Syrian authorities responded in the most brutal manner in their efforts to suppress them. In the year since then, although peaceful demonstrations have continued, the unrest has turned increasingly violent, with armed opposition groups, many loosely under the umbrella of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) carrying out attacks mainly against Syrian security forces. Amnesty International has obtained the names of more than 9,000 people reported to have died or been killed during or in connection with the protests and related unrest since mid-March 2011. Members of the security forces have also been killed, some by defecting soldiers who have taken up arms against the government.

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 350 people reported to have died in custody in this period and has documented many cases of torture or other ill-treatment. 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.

Despite the Syrian government's acceptance on 27 March 2012 of the six-point plan drawn up by the Joint Special Envoy for the United Nations and the Arab League on Syria, Kofi Annan, and the ceasefire agreement of 12 April, Amnesty International has continued to receive reports of arrests and continuing detention of people in conditions amounting to enforced disappearance. Amnesty International has previously documented human rights violations and abuses against injured people and health professionals in selected Syrian hospitals. For more information, please see Amnesty International's report *Health crisis: Syrian government targets the wounded and health workers* <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/059/2011/en>.

Since April 2011, Amnesty International has documented systematic and widespread human rights violations which amount to crimes against humanity, and has called for the situation in Syria to be referred to the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, as well as an international arms embargo on Syria, and for an assets freeze on President Bashar al-Assad and his close associates.

**Go to the interactive Eyes on Syria map ([www.eyesonsyria.org](http://www.eyesonsyria.org)) to see where human rights violations are being committed in Syria, and Amnesty International's global activism to seek justice.**

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

Further information on UA: 82/12 Index: MDE 24/043/2012 Issue Date: 11 May 2012