

# URGENT ACTION

## GRAVE FEARS FOR HEALTH OF SYRIAN ACTIVIST

**Prominent Syrian pro-reform activist Mohamed Anwar Dabbas was taken from a hospital by Syrian security forces after he was seriously injured during a demonstration on 1 January 2012. He has not been heard from since. There is grave concern for his well-being as it is not known whether he is receiving adequate medical treatment.**

**Mohamed Anwar Dabbas** was attending a peaceful pro-reform protest in his hometown Daraya, near Damascus. An eye witness has said that demonstrators were gathered in the city centre when heavy shooting began. At least three snipers are believed to have been shooting at the demonstrators, injuring over 20 people. According to the witness, Mohamed Anwar Dabbas – who was shot in the upper body, close to his heart - was the only individual seriously injured.

Mohamed Anwar Dabbas was initially taken to a small private hospital in Daraya, where the doctors informed a family member that his injuries were too serious for them to treat him and that he needed to be operated on by a specialist immediately. He was then transferred to the national hospital in Daraya, where the doctors began to prepare him for the operation, while contemplating whether to transfer him to a bigger hospital in Damascus instead of waiting for a specialist to arrive. A family member present at the hospital said that at this point plain-clothed members of the Air Force Intelligence arrived and ordered medical staff to prepare Mohamed Anwar Dabbas for transport as they said they wanted to take him to the hospital in Damascus. Members of his family were not allowed to accompany him and he was taken away while unconscious. The ambulance driver later told the family that he had been ordered to go to a military hospital in al-Mezzeh, on the outskirts of Damascus, instead.

No one has heard from Mohamed Anwar Dabbas since he was taken. When members of the family asked about him at the military hospital, they were told that no information on the patients is available and were asked to leave. Due to the seriousness of his injuries, there is grave concern about his health as it is not clear whether the specialised care he requires is available to him at the military hospital. While it is unclear why Mohamed Anwar Dabbas was taken, or what his current legal status is, Amnesty International believes that he may be a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for his peaceful pro-reform activities.

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

- Urging the Syrian authorities to ensure Mohamed Anwar Dabbas is provided with the specialised medical care that he requires and that he is protected from any ill-treatment and torture and given immediate access to his family.
- Asking for clarification of Mohamed Anwar Dabbas' current whereabouts and legal status, noting that if he is held solely because of his pro-reform activism, Amnesty International would consider him to be a prisoner of conscience and call for his immediate and unconditional release.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 17 FEBRUARY 2012 TO:**

#### President

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

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

#### Ministry of Interior

His Excellency Major General Mohamad  
 Ibrahim al-Shaar  
 Minister of Interior  
 'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar Street  
 Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic  
 Fax: +963 11 311 0554

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

#### **Also send copies to:**

#### Minister of Foreign Affairs

Walid al-Mu'allim  
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
 al-Rashid Street  
 Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic  
 Fax: +963 11 214 6251/6252/6253

**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



Mohamed Anwar Dabbas holding a flower during a peaceful pro-reform demonstration in Daraya in Spring 2011. ©Private.

Pro-reform demonstrations began in Syria in February 2011 and evolved into mass protests in mid-March. 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 4,400 people reported to have died or been killed during or in connection with the protests since mid-March 2011. Many are believed to have been shot by security forces using live ammunition while participating in peaceful protests or attending funerals of people killed in earlier protests. Members of the security forces have also been killed, some by defecting members of the army and others who have taken up arms against the government.

Amnesty International has previously documented serious human rights violations committed in at least four government-run hospitals in Syria (for further information, please see *Health Crisis: Syrian Government Targets the Wounded and Health Workers*, Index MDE 24/059/2011, October 2011, <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/059/2011/en>), where the organization found evidence that wounded patients were subjected to torture and ill-treatment, including by medical workers. Hospital workers suspected of treating protesters and others injured in unrest-related incidents have themselves faced arrest and torture.

Amnesty International found that patients have been assaulted by medical staff, health workers and security personnel in at least the national hospitals in Baniyas, Homs and Tell Kalakh and the military hospital in Homs. One doctor in Homs military hospital told Amnesty International he had seen four doctors and more than 20 nurses abusing patients.

Patients have also been removed from hospitals. On 7 September 2011 for example, security forces looking for an alleged armed field commander opposed to the government raided al-Birr wa al-Khadamat Hospital in Homs. When they did not find him, they arrested 18 wounded people. A health worker present during the raid told Amnesty International he saw at least one unconscious patient having his ventilator removed before he was taken away.

Mohamed Anwar Dabbas works in real estate while studying law and has been a leading peaceful activist since the start of the unrest. During demonstrations, he regularly inspired the crowd to chant. He was previously arrested in mid-August 2011 in the context of his pro-reform activities but released shortly after. He is married to the sister of Ghayath Mattar, a fellow activist who was arrested by Syrian security forces on 6 September 2011 and whose body was returned to the family four days later (for more information please see Amnesty International Urgent Action, *Death in custody of Syrian activist*, <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/052/2011/en>).

The demonstration on 1 January 2011 was organized in the context of the reported presence of League of Arab States observers, who were rumoured to be present in Daraya on this day. Despite the presence of the Arab League observer mission in Syria, the fierce crack-down on peaceful protests by the Syrian authorities appears to continue. Witnesses in Daraya told Amnesty International that at least 17 people were arrested on 1 January following neighbourhood raids by the security forces.

Name: Mohamed Anwar Dabbas

Gender m/f: Male

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