

URGENT ACTION

BROTHER OF KILLED SYRIAN ACTIVIST AT RISK

Hazem Taisir Mattar, brother of killed Syrian activist Ghayath Mattar, has been missing from his hometown of Daraya, Syria, since 7 February. There are fears he may have been arrested and is now held in secret detention in conditions amounting to enforced disappearance. If so, he is at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

According to a contact of Amnesty International in Syria, Hazem Taisir Mattar left the home of a relative at around 8:30pm on 7 February 2012. He may have been intending to drive to the shop where he works. By 11pm, no one had heard from him. His relatives tried to reach him on his mobile phone, but it had been switched off. His whereabouts have remained unknown since then. His family has not asked for information from the authorities directly as they are too afraid to do so. Similarly, as far as Amnesty International is aware, the authorities have not attempted to provide his family with any information as to his fate, including through any public announcements.

Activists in Daraya have reported that the presence of security forces in the area has increased significantly since the start of February 2012, The weekend before Hazem Taisir Mattar went missing, he was stopped by a member of the security forces in the street and asked to surrender his mobile phone.

Along with his father, Hazem Taisir Mattar had previously been arrested by members of the Air Force Security on 6 June 2011 and held for one day. During this time, he was questioned extensively about his brother, Ghayath Mattar, a prominent activist in the area who was arrested later on 6 September 2011 and was subsequently killed, apparently while in the custody of the Syrian authorities.

Hazem Taisir Mattar is not believed to have been taking part in any pro-reform activities in the context of the on-going unrest in Syria. However, it is feared that he has been arrested and is being held in secret detention because of the security forces' continuing interest in him and his family, as well as the on-going security operations in Daraya during which a number of persons have gone missing and have later been found to be detained. If Hazem Taisir Mattar has been arrested, he would be at serious risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

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

- Express concern that Hazem Taisir Mattar may have been arrested and may now be held in secret detention and call on the authorities to immediately disclose any information they have about his whereabouts;
- Call for Hazem Taisir Mattar to be protected from torture or other ill-treatment, allowed immediate contact with his family and a lawyer of his choice, and granted all necessary medical care;
- Call on the authorities to release him immediately if he is detained, unless he is to be charged with an internationally recognizable criminal offence and tried according to international fair trial standards.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 29 MARCH 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 11 214 625 3(keep trying)

Salutation: Your Excellence

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. This is the second update of UA 250/11. Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/054/2011/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



Hazem Taisir Mattar
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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 5,700 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 participating in peaceful protests or attending funerals of people killed in earlier 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 members of the army and others who have taken up arms against the government.

Thousands of people have been arrested, with many held incommunicado at unknown locations at which torture and other ill-treatment are reported to be rife. Over 260 people are reported to have died in custody in highly suspicious circumstances since 1 April 2011.

The Syrian state has multiple security and intelligence agencies in addition to even more opaque groups, often armed but not necessarily uniformed, who also 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 and, in some cases, killing people perceived to be linked to or supportive of the state.

Hazem Taisir Mattar is married with one child and works in a shop. According to Amnesty International's contact in Syria, members of the security forces were reported to have damaged some of the shops in Daraya and Hazem Taisir Mattar may have intended to visit the shop in order to clean up any damages.

Hazem Taisir Mattar's brother, Ghayath Mattar, aged 26, was arrested on 6 September 2011, along with his friends and fellow activists Yahya Shurbaji, Ma'an Shurbaji, Mazen Zyadeh and Mohamed Tayseer Khouliani. Prior to their arrest, the five men were involved in organising the demonstrations in Daraya. The official reason given for his death was "shot by armed gangs"; however his body reportedly showed bruising and other signs of ill-treatment. The other four men detained with him remain in incommunicado detention at an unknown location, in conditions amounting to enforced disappearance. (For more information, please see: UA: 268/11, *Death In custody Of Syrian activist*, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/052/2011/en>)

In addition to the arrest of Hazem Taisir Mattar and his father in June, Hazem Taisir Mattar's other brother, Anas Mattar, was also previously arrested on 7 July 2011 and released on 10 September, the same day that Ghayath Mattar's body was returned to his family.

Another member of his family, his brother-in-law, Mohamed Anwar Dabbas, was also arrested on 1 January 2012 after being injured at a demonstration. He has been missing since his arrest. (For further information, please see: UA 006/12, *Grave fears for health of Syrian activist: Mohamed Anwar Dabbas* <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/002/2012/en>)

Name: Hazem Taisir Mattar
Gender m/f: M

Further information on UA: 250/11 Index: MDE 24/013/2012 Issue Date: 16 February 2012