

URGENT ACTION

TURKISH JOURNALISTS RELEASED

Turkish journalists Adem Özköse and Hamit Coşkun arrived back in Turkey on 13 May after being detained in Syria for two months.

Adem Özköse, a 34-year-old reporter and **Hamit Coşkun**, a 21-year-old cameraman, crossed the Turkish border into Syria on 5 March 2012. Their last contact with colleagues was from the northern town of Idlib on 10 March. They confirmed to Amnesty International that they were captured by members of *Shabiha* (armed gangs supporting the Syrian authorities), who held them captive in different houses until 17 March. During this time, they were repeatedly threatened at gunpoint.

On 17 March, the men were taken to the police station in Idlib and from there to an unidentified detention facility in the capital, Damascus, where they were each held in a small cell in solitary confinement. Adem Özköse told Amnesty International that his cell only had a very small window and he was unable to see the sun. He described seeing other detainees held together in overcrowded small cells, some of whom appeared to be as young as 14 years old. Although both men confirmed that they were not physically tortured themselves, they regularly heard other detainees cry and scream in the prison and believe this was caused by torture.

Both men were forced to sleep on the floor with few blankets and had to eat with their hands. They were allowed to make brief use of the toilet at three scheduled times each day.

Despite repeated requests, the Syrian authorities did not give any information to Adem Özköse or Hamit Coşkun about the reasons for their arrest or their continuing detention.

Their release was negotiated by the Iranian authorities, and the two men first travelled to Iran, and then back to Turkey. Two Iranians who had been kidnapped in Syria apparently by opposition forces were also released shortly afterwards, although Iranian officials have denied any link between the two sets of releases.

The men told Amnesty International that they very much appreciated the efforts and support of the Amnesty International membership and would like to thank everyone who has written to the Syrian authorities on their behalf.

No further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

This is the third update of UA 82/12. Further information: <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/043/2012/en>

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