

URGENT ACTION

SYRIAN PROTEST DETAINEES AT RISK

At least 93 people are reported to have been arrested in Syria by security forces between 8 and 23 March in relation to recent protests, and remain detained in unknown locations. They are at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

Largely peaceful protests, which similarly to elsewhere in the region have called for more political freedoms and an end to corruption, erupted on 15 March in the Syrian capital of Damascus. Three days later larger-scale protests spread to the southern town of Dera'a, as well as other parts of the country. The Syrian authorities reacted to many of them by heavy-handedly dispersing protesters, mostly using batons. In Dera'a they also used tear gas and live bullets, reportedly resulting in the death of at least 13 protesters and the injury of many others.

The Syrian authorities have also made sweeping arrests. Based on reports from Syrian human rights organizations and relatives, Amnesty International has compiled the names of 93 people who were arrested between 8 and 23 March in Damascus and the cities and towns of Aleppo, Baniyas, Dera'a, Douma, Hama, Homs, Latakia, Ma'aratan Nu'man and al-Malkiyah. Although their places of detention are unknown, they are believed to be held in detention centres run by security forces such as Military Security that are notorious for torture and other ill-treatment. The real number of those arrested is likely to be considerably higher. According to one Syrian human rights organization, around 300 people had been arrested in Dera'a in the five days up to and including 22 March.

Among the 93 detainees are five women and at least 12 children under the age of 18. The 93 include school and university students, journalists, intellectuals and political activists. Some are members of the same family. Not all of them took part in the demonstrations, but the arrests of many of them seem to be related to their outspoken support of protests in Syria, whether orally in public gatherings or in writing, on the internet and elsewhere. Amnesty International believes that many of those detained are likely to be prisoners of conscience, held merely for exercising their legitimate right to freedom of expression and association by peacefully supporting or taking part in protests.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Arabic, English, French or your own language, mentioning as many names as possible:

- Expressing concern at the continuing detention in unknown locations of at least 93 people in relation to recent protests and calling for their immediate and unconditional release if they are held solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and association;
- Seeking clarification as to the whereabouts of all those detained and calling on the Syrian authorities to ensure that all are protected from torture and other ill-treatment while held, and are granted immediate access to their families, lawyers of their choosing and any medical treatment they may need;
- Reminding the authorities that, as a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, they are obliged to uphold the rights to freedom of expression and association.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 4 MAY 2011 TO:

President

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

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Interior

Major Sa'id Mohamed Samour
 Ministry of Interior
 'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar Street
 Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
 Fax: +963 11 222 3428

Salutation: Your Excellency

And 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

Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
 INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The 93 detained include university students **'Abdullah Mas'oud, Adham Bittar, Wissam Bdiwi, Hassan al-Homsi, Shahem al-Yousefi** and **Manhal Shahni**. They were all arrested on 8 March from their homes in the town of Ma'aratan Nu'man, apparently for calling for anti-government protests on Facebook. Seventeen-year-old high school students **'Azo Sriyoul, Yasser Ibrahim, Amjad al-Samadi** and **Ahmed Majed al-Saydawi** were all arrested on 11 March from their high school in Douma, near Damascus, for writing anti-government slogans on the wall.

Marwa al-Ghemyan, a 17-year-old female student, was one of a group of at least 11 people who were arrested on 15 March for taking part in a small peaceful demonstration that was held in Damascus. According to some reports her arrest was recorded on this video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5hRoCIBSzy&feature=related>

Nasr Sa'id was arrested on 16 March when he responded to a summons from the State Security branch in the coastal city of Latakia, apparently for distributing brochures calling for democratic change.

Bara'ah Kalziyeh and **Hussein al-Labwani**, a relative of prisoner of conscience Kamal al-Labwani, **Mohammed Adib Matar** and **Mahmoud al-Ghorani**, brother of prisoner of conscience Tareq al-Ghorani, **Mohammed al-Khatib** and **Mohammed Darwich** were all arrested on 16 March for taking part that day in a small demonstration in Damascus to demand the release of political prisoners.

Hussein Mustafa 'Ali, aged 25, is suspected to have been arrested on 18 March possibly for taking part in a protest that was held in the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus that day. According to his family, they have not heard from him since that day and his mobile is turned off. They did, however, see a glimpse of him on one of the protest videos posted on YouTube. As far as Amnesty International is aware at least 10 other men were also arrested that day from the Umayyad Mosque.

'Issa Masalmeh was arrested from his home in Dera'a on 21 March. He is a leading member of an unauthorized opposition party, the Arab Socialist Union.

Mus'ab Sheikh Amin, aged 14, **Rafe' Abu Ghaloun**, aged 16, **'Abdullah Amin**, aged 17, and **Saleh Abu Ghaloun**, aged 18, were all arrested on 22 March by Military Security in the northern city of Aleppo apparently for attempting to demonstrate in support of the protests in Dera'a. According to Mus'ab Sheikh Amin's family, when they saw him with Military Security officers who brought him to his home to search it, his hands and legs were badly injured and his clothes were bloodied. Reportedly, the families of the four were thrown out of the Military Security branch in Aleppo when they attempted to ask for the whereabouts of their sons.

Lo'ay Hussein, a writer and journalist, was arrested from his home near Damascus on 22 March apparently for publishing on the internet a petition in solidarity with protestors in Dera'a and calling for the Syrian people's right to peacefully expressing their opinions.

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