

URGENT ACTION

ARRESTS SURGE AS PROTESTS CONTINUE

Hundreds of people are believed to be held incommunicado at unknown locations across Syria, following a new peak in arrests by Syrian authorities as protests continue. Those held are at serious risk of torture and other ill-treatment. Hundreds of others who were being held in connection with the protests are known to have been released in recent weeks.

Those released in April include **Bara'ah Kalziyeh, Mohammed Mounir al-Faqir, Mohammed Darwich, Khaled Sid Mohand, Nawras 'Awdat Allah, and Qasem 'Abd al-Latif**. Concerns over the safety of the hundreds believed to be held incommunicado are heightened by reports of torture and other ill-treatment from detainees who were recently released. Among the detainees known to Amnesty International, there is particular concern for the following individuals:

Mohammed Hasan al-Labwani, who suffers from a pituitary tumour, was arrested from his home on 2 May as part of a house-to-house raid in the town of al-Zabadani, near Damascus. According to some detainees who were held with him and released on 4 May, Mohammed Hasan al-Labwani has been tortured. Mohammed Hasan al-Labwani is the brother-in-law of prisoner of conscience Kamal al-Labwani.

Political activists **Hassan 'Abd al-'Adhim**, aged 79, and **'Omar Qashaash**, aged 85, were arrested on 28 and 30 April respectively, apparently for statements they made to the media in support of the protests. Hassan 'Abd al-'Adhim is a lawyer and the Secretary General of the Democratic Arab Socialist Union Party in Syria. He was arrested at his office in Damascus by State Security. He reportedly suffers from diabetes, for which he needs regular medication. 'Omar Qashaash was arrested in Aleppo and is the leading member of the Syrian Democratic People's Party and a long-standing union activist.

Amnesty International is not aware whether the three men are receiving appropriate medication and medical supervision or an adequate diet.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Arabic, English, French or your own language:

- Expressing concern about the detention at unknown locations of hundreds of people in relation to popular protests, and the reported torture or other ill-treatment of some of those detained;
- Calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all those detained for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and association;
- Seeking clarification as to the whereabouts of all those detained and urging 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.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 17 JUNE 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 General Mohamed Ibrahim al-Sha'ar
 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. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the third update of UA 87/11. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/016/2011/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Despite the lifting of the state of emergency on 21 April, the Syrian army and security forces continue to carry out mass arrests, especially in the cities and towns where large popular protests have taken place. The arrests have also targeted people perceived to have organized or openly supported those protests, whether orally in public gatherings, in the media, on the internet or elsewhere. They include political and human rights activists, mosque imams and journalists. Amnesty International believes that many of those detained are likely to be prisoners of conscience, held merely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and association by peacefully supporting or taking part in protests.

Those recently detained and who remain incommunicado include the following individuals:

Dorothy Parvaz, an Al Jazeera journalist, was arrested upon arrival at Damascus International Airport on 29 April. According to Al Jazeera, she flew from Qatar to help cover the ongoing events. Firas Fayyad, a film director, was arrested on 30 April at an internet cafe in Damascus. 'Abd al-Rahman Hammada, a 20-year-old student, was taken from his home in Damascus on 30 April by security forces who were searching for his brother Wa'el.

Wa'el Hammada and his wife, Razan Zaitouneh, a human rights activist and leading human rights lawyer respectively, have gone into hiding. 'Abdullah Khalil, a human rights lawyer, was arrested in the city of al-Raqqa on 1 May, apparently for appearing on Al Jazeera TV on 30 April when he spoke about the widespread arrests and advocated a democratic resolution of the situation. Ahmed Haji Khalaf, a member of the board of directors of the Arab Organization for Human Rights was also arrested in al-Raqqa, on 2 May, apparently for his activities in support of the protests. Human rights activist Manhal Mahmoud Barish and his two brothers, Ayham and Shadi Barish, were arrested on 3 May as part of a widespread house-to-house raid in the town of Saraqeb.

For more than 20 years Amnesty International has documented the widespread torture and other ill-treatment which is committed with impunity in Syrian detention centres. The disturbing first-hand reports of torture that Amnesty International has obtained recently heighten concern for the safety of the above detainees and others held incommunicado. Two men from the coastal city of Baniyas, for example, who were recently released, said that members of the security forces beat them and many other detainees viciously on the neck and collarbone with rifle butts. One detainee said that after being stripped and beaten he was made to lick his blood off the floor. He said that he and others detained with him had been beaten with sticks and cables as well as kicked and punched. Held without food for three days in overcrowded conditions in one detention centre, he said they had to resort to drinking dirty water from a toilet.

Amnesty International has also received reports that, out of fear of arrest, a number of other activities have gone into hiding. In addition to Wa'el Hammada and Razan Zaitouneh mentioned above, Amnesty International is aware that Haytham al-Maleh, a prominent human rights lawyer, Hind and 'Omar al-Labwani, human rights activists and children of prisoner of conscience Kamal al-Labwani, Suhair al-Atassi, President of the unauthorized Jamal Atassi Forum, Walid al-Bunni, a member of the Damascus Declaration for Democratic National Change opposition coalition and twice a prisoner of conscience, and Jwan Yousef Khorshid, a Syrian Kurd and member of the unauthorized Kurdish Committee for Human Rights in Syria (RASED), have all gone into hiding. In the case of Jwan Yousef Khorshid, it was reported that Military Security threatened to arrest his wife on 5 May if he did not hand himself over within 24 hours.

Amnesty International has learned that Mahmoud 'Issa, a human rights activist who was detained by Political Security officials on 19 April, has been referred to court. Amnesty International is still trying to verify which court he was referred to and what charges have been brought against him.

Further information on UA: 87/11 Index: MDE 24/019/2011 Issue Date: 06 May 2011

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