

URGENT ACTION

SYRIAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST RE-ARRESTED

Human rights activist Mohammed Najati Tayyara, aged 65, has been held since 12 May following media interviews he gave about the abuse of pro-reformist protesters by the Syrian government. Despite a judge ordering his release on bail on 29 August, he was reportedly re-arrested the same day by Air Force Intelligence and beaten in custody.

Mohammed Najati Tayyara, a retired school teacher, was arrested on 12 May by officers of Syrian Political Security, who stopped the car in which he and a friend were travelling in the city of Homs, north-western Syria. According to a source in Syria, he was referred to a criminal court judge and charged under Article 286 of the Syrian Penal Code for "convey[ing] within Syria false news that could debilitate the morale of the nation". He was taken to Homs Central Prison and kept in severely cramped conditions, reportedly in a cell with about 300 other detainees and with only one toilet between them.

On 29 August a judge ordered his release on bail pending his trial. However, according to a source in Syria, while in prison awaiting his release, he was re-arrested by Air Force Intelligence officers, who took him to the Military Intelligence-run detention centre known as "al-Boloneh Prison" in Homs. It appears that he was subjected there to beatings to the head and face during interrogation and returned to Homs Central Prison 11 days later, where he remains. Mohammed Najati Tayyara requires daily medication for high blood pressure and is apparently suffering from prostate cancer, heightening concerns for his wellbeing.

Mohammed Najati Tayyara recently gave several media interviews, including to Al Jazeera and the BBC, about attacks by Syrian security forces on pro-reformist demonstrators in Homs. He publicly called for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to stop using violence against protesters. Amnesty International is concerned that he may be held for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression, in which case he would be considered a prisoner of conscience.

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

- Express concern that Mohammed Najati Tayyara may be held solely for peacefully expressing his views on the actions of the security forces against pro-reform protesters, in which case he is a prisoner of conscience and should be released immediately and unconditionally;
- Express concern also that his continuing detention appears to be unlawful by breaching a court order for his release;
- Urge the authorities to take all measures to ensure he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and is given any medical attention he needs.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 26 OCTOBER 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 Defence

His Excellency General Dawood Rajiha
Ministry of Defence
Omayyad Square, Damascus
Syrian Arab Republic

Fax: +963 11 666 2460

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

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 113110554

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Syria's various security and intelligence forces have for decades enjoyed wide-ranging special powers outside judicial control resulting in the widespread use of arbitrary and incommunicado detention, torture and other ill-treatment of political suspects. Since March 2011, reports of torture and other ill-treatment in detention have escalated significantly.

Since pro-reform demonstrations evolved into large-scale protests in mid-March, thousands have been arrested throughout the country by the Syrian security forces. The mainly peaceful protests are generally calling for increased rights and freedom as well as to an end to President Bashar al-Assad's rule. The authorities have responded with wide-scale brutality to suppress dissent. Amnesty International has received numerous accounts of detainees being tortured or otherwise ill-treated including reports of over 90 deaths in custody, in many cases as an apparent result of such abuses and affecting those aged from 13 to 72 years. Amnesty International has also obtained some 2,100 names of people reported to have died or been killed during or in connection with the protests since mid-March. The majority appear to have been shot by security forces using live ammunition during peaceful protests and even when attending funerals of others killed in protests.

Homs has seen repeated large-scale protests followed by repression by the security forces. It has been severely affected by an escalating crackdown on pro-reform protests, with over 430 individuals recorded by Amnesty International as having died there during or in connection with the protests up to mid-August, over 200 of whom died during the first two weeks of August alone. Among the dead are 40 individuals reported to have died in custody, 11 of them during the first two weeks of August. On 1 September, Amnesty International published an Urgent Action on the incommunicado detention of Mohammed Najati Tayyara's nephew, Mohamed Iyyad Tayyara, also a human rights activist. He was arrested on 28 August and has since been held incommunicado. He is believed to be held by Military Intelligence where he is in danger of torture and other ill-treatment. As far as Amnesty International is aware the authorities have not said why they are holding him, but prior to his arrest he had been documenting human rights abuses in Homs and passing the information to human rights organizations as well as attending peaceful protests (see <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/046/2011/en>).

Mohammed Najati Tayyara is a founding member of the Human Rights Association of Syria.

Name: Mohammed Najati Tayyara

Gender m

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