

# URGENT ACTION

## FEARS FOR MISSING SYRIAN ACTIVIST

**Syrian activist Ghassan Yasin went missing from his hometown Aleppo, northern Syria, on 18 August. He is believed to be in secret detention at the Political Security branch in Aleppo. He was previously arrested and reportedly tortured by Syrian security forces and suffers from hepatitis C.**



**Ghassan Yasin** was last seen around 4pm after meeting with a group of protest organizers in Aleppo. At the time of his disappearance, he had been in hiding from the security forces for approximately three months. There was no news about him until early September, when a detainee who had recently been released said he had shared a cell with Ghassan Yasin at the Political Security branch in Aleppo.

According to a contact, a family member subsequently visited the branch on 13 September to bring clothes for him, but was told that he was not being held there and that the branch had no knowledge of him. The same contact indicated that the family was continuing to try to find out about his whereabouts but so far had been unsuccessful. He appears to be a victim of enforced disappearance, placing his safety at grave risk.

According to the person claiming to be his former cell-mate, Ghassan Yasin had not been tortured when he last saw him, but his health was suffering, possibly due to the effects of the detention on his illness. It is not known whether he is currently experiencing any complications that may arise from a hepatitis C infection and, if so, whether he is receiving adequate medical care for them. Ghassan Yasin was previously detained for 35 days in February, during which he was reportedly tortured for peacefully campaigning against state corruption.

No charges are known to have been brought against Ghassan Yasin but his apparent detention may be due to his involvement with peaceful pro-reform demonstrations. He may therefore be a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for exercising his rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

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

- Express concern that Ghassan Yasin appears to be a victim of enforced disappearance detained in secret since 18 August 2011;
- Urge the Syrian authorities to immediately disclose his whereabouts and legal status, allow him access to his family and a lawyer of his choice, ensure he is fully protected against torture or other ill-treatment, and provided with any medical attention he may require;
- Call for Ghassan Yasin to be released immediately and unconditionally if he being detained solely for exercising his rights to freedom of expression and assembly and therefore a prisoner of conscience.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 4 NOVEMBER 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 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**

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

**AMNESTY  
 INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Pro-reform demonstrations began in Syria in February 2011 and evolved into mass protests in mid-March. The protests have been largely peaceful, yet 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 2,200 people reported to have died or been killed during or in connection with the protests since mid-March. 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.

Thousands of other people have been arrested, with many held incommunicado at unknown locations at which torture and other ill-treatment are reported to be rife. At least 102 men and one woman have died in detention in highly suspicious circumstances since 1 April. Some of the dead, who include children, were also mutilated either before or after death in particularly grotesque ways apparently intended to strike terror into the families to whom their corpses were returned. For further information, please see *New evidence of Syria brutality emerges as woman's mutilated body is found* (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/new-evidence-syria-brutality-emerges-woman%E2%80%99s-mutilated-body-found-2011-09-2>) and *Syria: Deadly detention: Deaths in custody amid popular protest in Syria* (<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/035/2011/en>).

Ghassan Yasin, aged 35 and a marketing and public relations professional, was previously arrested on 18 February 2011 after he publicly spoke out against corruption in Syria and founded an organization to peacefully combat corruption, which he publicized via Facebook. Although he was released without any charges being brought against him, he claimed through his Facebook page that he was detained because of his anti-corruption activities.

According to a contact, security forces asked Ghassan Yasin to report to them in mid-May, which he refused to do. He then left his home and went into hiding, where he remained until his apparent arrest in August.

Following his arrest in February, he was reportedly held incommunicado in solitary confinement in a dark cell for 35 days and tortured and otherwise ill-treated. A contact told Amnesty International that Ghassan Yasin was regularly beaten until he lost consciousness, had electric shocks applied to his body and cold water poured on him, threatened with violence against members of his family and not given sufficient clothing or food.

On his Facebook page, Ghassan Yasin said that, before he was released on 24 March, he was taken to see a journalist, who was also detained, and that a member of the security forces pointed to him and said to the journalist: "Do you see what we did to him? He is also a writer, like you."

Name: Ghassan Yasin

Gender m/f: Male