

# URGENT ACTION

## SYRIAN MEN DETAINED INCOMMUNICADO

**Four men from the Damascus suburb of Daraya are being held incommunicado after their arrest by Syrian security forces on 23 September. Amnesty International fears for their safety, particularly because one was threatened with death during their arrest.**

Haytham Al Hamwi, a Syrian pro-reform activist in exile, told Amnesty International that, according to information he had received, more than 20 members of the security forces believed to belong to Air Force Intelligence arrived at his family's home on 23 September looking for his 22-year-old younger brother, **Muhammad Muhammad Al Hamwi**. His brother was with neighbours at the time, but the security forces arrested his 65-year-old father, **Muhammad Yassin Al Hamwi**. They also confiscated digital equipment from the flat and destroyed property. His mother was reported to have been threatened by the man in charge, who said, "I will crush the throat of your son with my foot. I will return him to you like Ghayath Mattar." Ghayath Mattar is an activist who died in custody four days after his arrest on 6 September.

The security forces then found Muhammad Muhammad Al Hamwi and arrested him along with two other men he had been visiting: 34-year-old **Ahmad Kuraitem** and 22-year-old **Shaker al-Masri**. Ahmad Kuraitem was said to have been beaten so badly that he lost consciousness before he was arrested. Amnesty International is gravely concerned about the safety of the four men, especially as Muhammad Yassin Al Hamwi suffers from high blood pressure and requires regular medication.

Muhammad Yassin Al Hamwi was previously detained for almost a month in May before being released on bail for participating in a pro-reform demonstration. Muhammad Muhammad Al Hamwi sometimes filmed protests and uploaded these to the internet. His arrest could be related to this. The other two men are each believed to have attended one or two demonstrations. Amnesty International believes that all four men may be prisoners of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

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

- Expressing concern that Muhammad Yassin Al Hamwi, Muhammad Muhammad Al Hamwi, Ahmad Kuraitem and Shaker al-Masri are being detained incommunicado and at an unknown location, asking for information regarding their place of detention, the reason for their arrest and their legal status, and calling for them to be fully protected from torture and other ill-treatment, allowed contact with their families and lawyers of their choice, and provided with any medication and medical attention they may require;
- Expressing concern that the four men may be detained solely for peacefully exercising their right to express their political views and noting that, if this is the case, Amnesty International would consider them prisoners of conscience and call for their immediate and unconditional release.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 7 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**

**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

Since the beginning of the popular protests in mid-March, the Syrian security forces have arrested thousands of people across the country. Amnesty International has received numerous accounts of detainees being tortured or otherwise ill-treated as well as reports of over 100 cases of deaths in custody. Many of these deaths appear to have been caused by torture or other ill-treatment.

According to human rights activists, Air Force Intelligence oversees arrests in Daraya. Along with the other Syrian intelligence services, it regularly detains people suspected of opposing the government and holds them incommunicado for lengthy periods in detention centres that are notorious for torture and other ill-treatment. Haytham Al Hamwi has told Amnesty International that he believes roughly 600 people from Daraya are currently imprisoned. Numbers remain unclear as the security forces refuse any information about the arrested persons in most cases.

Other people arrested from Daraya in the past months include brothers Yahya and Ma'an Shurbaji, as well as Mohamed Tayseer Khouliani, Mazen Zyadeh and Ghayath Mattar, all arrested on 6 September, allegedly also by Air Force Intelligence. Ghayath Mattar's body was returned to his family four days later. The official reason given for his death was that he was shot and killed by "armed gangs", but, according to witnesses and video footage seen by Amnesty International, his body showed signs of beatings and other ill-treatment. For further information, please refer to *Urgent Action: Syrian activists held incommunicado at risk* (<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/050/2011/en>) and *Urgent Action: Further information: Death in custody of Syrian activist* (<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/052/2011/en>).

Muhammad Yassin Al Hamwi, a shopkeeper, was first detained during the four-year imprisonment of his son, Haytham Al Hamwi, whom Amnesty International considered to be a prisoner of conscience convicted following a grossly unfair trial for, among other offences, participating in an unauthorized march against the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Muhammad Yassin Al Hamwi spent about two weeks in prison in July and August 2005 after participating in a conference that established a committee on behalf of prisoners of conscience in Syria. He was detained again between 1 and 26 May 2011, reportedly for attending a pro-reform demonstration. During this time, he was not allowed to take the medication he brought but did receive visits from the prison doctor and was given different medication.

Name: Muhammad Muhammad Al Hamwi, Muhammad Yassin Al Hamwi, Ahmad Kuraitem and Shaker al-Masri  
Gender m/f: All male

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