

URGENT ACTION

HEALTH FEARS FOR SYRIAN ACTIVIST

Syrian activist, Anas al-Shogre, who has been detained incommunicado since May, apparently for calling for and leading protests in the coastal city of Baniyas, is now believed to be held at a State Security branch in the capital Damascus. Reports suggest that he is in poor health and may have been subjected to torture or other ill-treatment.

One of **Anas al-Shogre's** brothers, who is living outside Syria, has told Amnesty International that the family have learnt from an apparently reliable source that Anas al-Shogre is currently held at the State Security branch in Damascus, that he is unwell and "has lost a lot of weight". This has heightened concern that he may have been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment. The source reportedly provided no further information.

Anas al-Shogre, a 23-year old student, was arrested during a security forces operation that began in Baniyas on 7 May. He was in hiding at the time. The Syrian authorities have not disclosed the reason for his arrest or where he is being held although, according to his brother, his family have made relentless efforts to obtain information about him.

Anas al-Shogre's family and local human rights activists believe that his arrest is related to his involvement in calling for and leading popular protests in the city of Baniyas, and for informing the media, including the BBC's Arabic Service, about human rights violations committed in the city by Syrian security forces. Amnesty International believes that Anas al-Shogre may be a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression and assembly, and is concerned that he is being held in conditions that amount to enforced disappearance.

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

- Express concern that Anas al-Shogre has been held incommunicado since May in conditions that amount to enforced disappearance, and that he is reported to be in poor health possibly as a result of torture or other ill-treatment;
- Call for Anas al-Shogre to be immediately and unconditionally released, if he is a prisoner of conscience held solely for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression and assembly by calling for and leading protests in Baniyas, or else released without further delay unless he is facing recognizable criminal charges and will receive a fair trial in conformity with international standards for fair trial;
- Urge the Syrian authorities to immediately disclose the whereabouts of Anas al-Shogre and all other detainees, end the use of enforced disappearances, safeguard all detainees from torture or other ill-treatment and allow them immediate access to lawyers of their choosing, to their families and to any medical treatment they require.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 15 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 check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 209/11. Further information: <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/030/2011/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since mid-March when popular protests calling for political reform started to spread nationwide, the Syrian authorities have responded in a brutal manner in their efforts to suppress them. The security forces have repeatedly used grossly excessive force, using snipers to shoot into crowds of peaceful protesters and deploying army tanks to shell residential areas. They have sought to justify such force on the pretext that the government is under attack by armed gangs.

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. The arrests have targeted people perceived to have organized or openly supported the 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. The mass arrests and rampant torture have also forced a number of political and human rights activists to go into hiding.

Another shocking feature of the government's bloody crackdown on the protests is the sharp rise in number of reported deaths in custody possibly due to torture. Amnesty International has recorded over 100 reported deaths in custody since the protests began.

Name: Anas al-Shogre

Gender m/f: Male

Further information on UA: 209/11 Index: MDE 24/064/2011 Issue Date: 4 October 2011