

URGENT ACTION

SITUATION OF DETAINED MAN STILL UNKNOWN

'Ali Sayed al-Shihabi, a Palestinian refugee living in Syria, who was detained in December 2012 and then subjected to enforced disappearance, has been confirmed to have been in the custody of the Syrian authorities. But his place of detention and present condition remain unknown.

'Ali Sayed al-Shihabi, an English-language teacher, went missing on his way to visit a friend in the al-Zahira al-Jadida area of Damascus during the night of 19 December 2012. Shortly after this, unofficial sources inside the security forces said he might be held at the Military Intelligence branch 235 (also called "Palestine branch") but when a leading Palestinian figure wrote to an official in the security forces, he received a response in October 2013 officially denying that 'Ali Sayed al-Shihabi had been arrested, heightening fears for his safety.

However, Amnesty International recently obtained a report from the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, which included information from the Syrian government dated 31 December 2013, stating that 'Ali Sayed al-Shihabi "was arrested on the basis of suspicions about his activities, and he is still under investigation by the competent judicial authorities." There has been no news about him since then.

It is unclear what 'Ali Sayed al-Shihabi is suspected of having done. He had been arrested in May 1982 and detained for almost 10 years in connection with his membership of the Party for Communist Action (PCA). He was released in 1991, but detained again from August 2006 until January 2007, reportedly on charges which included "knowingly broadcasting abroad false or exaggerated news which damages the reputation of the state or its financial standing" and "joining a political or social organization of an international nature without the permission of the government".

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

- Urging the Syrian authorities to reveal the whereabouts and legal status of 'Ali Sayed al-Shihabi, grant him immediate access to his family, lawyer and any medical attention he may require;
- Urging them to ensure that he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment;
- Calling for his release if he is not promptly charged with an internationally recognizable criminal offence.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 29 MAY 2014 TO:

President

Bashar al-Assad

Fax: +963 11 332 3410 (keep trying)

(If voice answers, say "Fax". Fax is the only reliable communication method;

please do not send letters)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice

Najm Hamad al-Ahmad

Fax: +963 11 666 2460

Email: moj@net.sy

Salutation: Your Excellency

Permanent Representative to the UN

Bashar Ja'afari, Ambassador

Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

820 Second Avenue, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10017

Fax: +1 212 983 4439

E-mail: exesec.syria@gmail.com

Salutation: Your Excellency

Where appropriate, please also send copies to the Syrian and Russian diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 223/13. Further information:

<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/039/2013/en>

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INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

'Ali Sayed al-Shihabi has written articles on political and social issues and also had two books published in Syria on social affairs. He has been summoned for questioning by the authorities many times and was a prisoner of conscience between 1982 and 1991 for his membership of the outlawed Party for Communist Action. He has since left the party. For more information see UA 222/06 (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/052/2006/en>) and update (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/003/2007/en>).

For an insight into the widespread torture and other ill-treatment in Syria's detention centres, please see I wanted to die: Syria's torture survivors speak out, (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/016/2012/en>) and Deadly detention: Deaths in custody amid popular protest in Syria, (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/035/2011/en>).

Recent arrests and deaths in custody of residents of Yarmouk have also been documented in Amnesty International's report Squeezing the life out of Yarmouk: War crimes against besieged civilians, March 2014 (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/008/2014/en>).

Name: 'Ali Sayed al-Shihabi
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 223/13 Index: MDE 24/017/2014 Issue Date: 17 April 2014