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## **Syria: Repression continues despite Annan plan hopes**

Arrests have been continuing in Syria only days after the Syrian government agreed to implement parts of Kofi Annan's six-point plan, Amnesty International said today.

Thirteen school pupils, all male and aged between 17 and 19, were reportedly arrested on 1 April by men in plain clothes at a secondary school specialising in business in the town of Daraya.

Family members told Amnesty International that according to eyewitness, the students were searched, beaten and verbally abused in front of other pupils before being taken away. The families have no information as to their whereabouts or safety.

The families of the 13 students told Amnesty International that they believe that the men who arrested their relatives belonged to Air Force Intelligence, a security body which has been responsible for many, if not most, of the arrests in Daraya since March 2011.

The Daraya region has throughout the year-long uprising seen widespread protests, in many cases led by young activists.

"There are thousands of people still in detention across Syria, many held incommunicado, in danger of being tortured, and without access to lawyers," said Ann Harrison, Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Deputy Director.

"Continuing to hold people in such conditions, and making new arrests like this, raises serious questions about how serious the government is about respecting its commitments under the Annan plan."

Kofi Annan, Joint Special Envoy for the United Nations and the Arab League on Syria, yesterday told the UN Security Council that the Syrian government had agreed to begin implementing parts of the plan immediately.

He indicated, however, that the government had not provided information on how it was fulfilling other parts of the plan, including its commitment to "intensify the pace and scale of the release of all persons detained arbitrarily owing to the recent incidents".

Amnesty International has received reports that scores of people are still being arrested on a daily basis. The organization is also aware of many cases of people arrested during February and March – for example some nine people arrested at the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression in February – who are still being held incommunicado and have not been released.

The organization said that it had received 232 names of individuals reported to have been killed since Syria agreed to the six-point plan on 27 March, including 17 children.

**Friends of Syria meeting**

Amnesty International said that the measures suggested by Sunday's Friends of Syria meeting to improve accountability for crimes against humanity in Syria highlighted the failure of the UN Security Council to deliver an international mechanism to hold those responsible to account.

In its final communiqué, the "Friends' Group" agreed to "develop a multilateral initiative to support international and Syrian efforts to document, analyze and store evidence of serious violations of human rights in order to deter such conduct and lay the foundation for future accountability."

Amnesty International said that any investigatory measures must be conducted in an independent and impartial manner and should preferably be under UN auspices. The organization reiterated its call for any UN mission deployed to the country as part of the Annan plan to include human rights monitors who would be able to pass vital information to investigators, including at the independent international Commission of Inquiry on Syria.

The organization said that documentation of crimes under international law by monitors was essential to ensure justice for victims and accountability for perpetrators.

Such accountability could be secured by investigations carried out by the International Criminal Court – which Amnesty International has called on the Security Council to make possible – or by national investigations, carried out on the basis of universal jurisdiction, leading to fair trials without the death penalty.

"After a year of inaction, the Security Council finally gave its backing to Kofi Annan's plan last month and said it would consider further steps as appropriate," said Ann Harrison.

"But the burden is on the Security Council now to prove it has not merely given the Syrian government more time and cover to continue its ruthless repression".

"What we need to see now is legally-binding action from the Council to stop the violence, including ensuring accountability and stopping the flow of arms to the country."

### **Notes for editors**

The names of the students reported to have been arrested at the Commerce Secondary School of Daraya on 1 April are:

- 1- Omar al-Fahhal
- 2- Wa'el Khanji
- 3- Abd al-Wahab Fawwal
- 4- Majd Nayla
- 5- Nidal Dahous
- 6- Wa'el Idliby
- 7- Mohamed Sharebji
- 8- Mohamed Shaker Dabbas
- 9- Ali Khawladi
- 10- Mahmoud Badr

11- Anas al-Sharebji

12- Amjad Ali Wahby

13- Wa'el Qawqanji