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Joint Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch statement on Zaynab al-Hosni

In September 2011, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch issued statements following the killing and mutilation by unknown persons of a woman believed to be Zaynab al-Hosni.

Zaynab had vanished from her home in Homs in late July, and her family said that they had searched for her to no avail. Al-Hosni's family had confirmed to Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch that they had identified her body at a military hospital in Homs. The head and arms had been cut off and parts of the body, including the face, were heavily burned. The family subsequently held a funeral and buried the body.

On October 4, 2011, Syrian state television aired an interview with a woman who identified herself as Zaynab al-Hosni. In the interview, she says that she left her family's house to escape ill-treatment by her brothers.

Zaynab al-Hosni's family subsequently confirmed that the woman who appeared on Syrian television is indeed Zaynab al-Hosni. The family has not been able to speak to her to verify her current situation.

The identity of the murdered female victim buried by the al-Hosni family remains unknown and Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch called for an independent investigation to reveal her identity.

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch called on the Syrian authorities to allow them into the country without delay to investigate this and other disturbing cases that had been reported to them. Both, as well as UN human rights investigators, have repeatedly requested access to Syria since mass protests began in March but have been barred to date.

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch regret any inaccuracy in the misidentification of the body as that of Zaynab al-Hosni; both organizations regularly verify their information with multiple and independent sources.

Amnesty International published its news release after speaking directly to one of Zaynab's brothers. Human Rights Watch later interviewed in person al-Hosni's mother, as well as a brother who washed the corpse prior to burial, after they had escaped Syria to a neighboring country. It now appears that Zaynab's family misidentified the body that was presented to them due to the extensive damage to the body.

Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International call on the Syrian government to grant immediate access to independent human rights investigators, including the United Nations Commission of Inquiry set up in August.

On September 17 staff at the military hospital in Homs invited al-Hosni's mother to identify the body of a woman that had been brought to them, in light of the fact that Zaynab had been reported missing for over

two months. The mother identified the body as that of her missing daughter.

The organizations called on the Syrian authorities to immediately take steps to identify the woman whose body was buried, and to hold an investigation into the brutal, gruesome murder of a Syrian woman, as well as the wide-scale human rights violations that are occurring on a daily basis in Syria. The estimated death toll today exceeds 2600 people.

The news comes a day after the UN Security Council failed again to take a firm and legally binding position on the human rights crisis in Syria.