

URGENT ACTION

SYRIAN ACTIVIST AND HIS BROTHER DETAINED

Syrian brothers, 'Abd al-Rahman Hammada and Wa'el Hammada, have been detained incommunicado at an unknown location since 30 April and 12 May respectively. They are at grave risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

Political activist **Wa'el Hammada**, aged 35, and his wife, Razan Zaitouneh, a leading human rights activist, went into hiding in April. They feared being arrested because of their peaceful activities in relation to the current popular protests calling for political reform.

On 30 April, **'Abd al-Rahman Hammada**, a 20-year old accountant student, went to the couple's flat to get them some clothes. Armed men from one of Syria's security and intelligence agencies arrived a few minutes after his arrival and forced 'Abd al-Rahman Hammada to phone his brother to ask him to come to the flat. Wa'el Hammada did not go however, as he correctly guessed it was a trap. The armed officials then arrested 'Abd al-Rahman Hammada although, according to the family, he has not been involved in the protests. Twelve days later Wa'el Hammada was arrested at his workplace.

Both men continue to be detained. They are held incommunicado and their whereabouts are unknown; the Syrian authorities have not said where they are being held. They are at high risk of torture; torture of detainees is routine and systematic in Syria and committed with impunity. Razan Zaitouneh told Amnesty International, "We are constantly distressed as we have not heard anything about my husband or his brother since their arrests."

Amnesty International believes that both men are prisoners of conscience, with Wa'el Hammada detained solely for legitimately exercising his rights to freedom of expression and association and 'Abd al-Rahman Hammada apparently detained solely on account of his family relationship with Wa'el Hammada.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Arabic, English, French or your own language:

- Calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Wa'el Hammada and 'Abd al-Rahman Hammada who Amnesty International considers to be prisoners of conscience;
- Expressing concern that they have been held incommunicado at unknown locations since 30 April and 12 May respectively, and calling for them to be fully protected against possible torture or other ill-treatment;
- Urging the Syrian authorities to take immediate steps to name and disclose the whereabouts of all political detainees and to give them immediate access to lawyers of their choosing and their families and any medical treatment they need, and to safeguard them from torture or other ill-treatment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 4 JULY 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 Interior

Major General Mohamed Ibrahim al-Sha'ar
 Ministry of Interior
 'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar Street
 Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
 Fax: +963 11 222 3428

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

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.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Syrian army and security forces have been carrying out mass arrests since mid-March, when popular protests called for political reform and increasingly for the Syrian President, Bashar al-Assad, to step down. The arrests particularly took place in the cities and towns that witnessed the height of popular protests. In the coastal city of Baniyas for example, all males above the age of 15 were rounded up. The arrests have also targeted people perceived to have organized or openly supported those 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. These mass arrests have forced a number of political and human rights activists to go into hiding.

Amnesty International believes that many of those detained are likely to be prisoners of conscience, held merely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and association by peacefully supporting or taking part in protests. For more information on the mass arrests, see the recent Urgent Action: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/019/2011/en>.

Despite the fear of arrest Razan Zaitouneh described the arrest of her brother-in-law to Amnesty International as follows:

“‘Abd al-Rahman Hammada, went to our flat on 30 April to get us some clothes as we were already in hiding. Minutes after his arrival armed men showed up. ‘Abd al-Rahman immediately called my husband, Wa’el, and told him that armed men are surrounding the building and on the roof. He said that they are hammering at the door and threatening to break it if he does not allow them in. ‘Abd al-Rahman was trapped there for a whole hour and only opened the door, according to eye witnesses, after the armed men apparently told him that they would do him no harm. We later learned that once ‘Abd al-Rahman opened the door, the armed men broke in violently and turned the flat upside down!

‘Abd al-Rahman then called Wa’el and asked him to come to the flat as he needs money. Wa’el replied that the money is in the drawer. ‘Abd al-Rahman then said that that is not enough. We knew that it was a trap as we left plenty of money in the flat. So Wa’el immediately asked his brother: Are you ok? What is happening? At that point the phone turned off and we never heard from ‘Abd al-Rahman after that.

Since the beginning of the unrest, we have been living in constant fear of arrest and intolerable agony over the safety of those arrested. So far thousands have been detained.”

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