

# URGENT ACTION

## AMJAD KASSEM SEEN IN DETENTION

**Syrian businessman Amjad Kassem, held in conditions amounting to enforced disappearance since 21 May, was seen in two State Security branches in the capital, Damascus by detainees who have since been released. The authorities have given no information to his family.**

**Amjad Kassem** was last heard from on 21 May 2012, when he called his mother to tell her he was being taken to a branch of the Syrian State Security in Damascus by members of the security forces. Despite repeated inquiries, the authorities have told his family and lawyer nothing about his wellbeing and whereabouts.

At the end of July 2012, a recently released detainee, who knew Amjad Kassem, contacted his family to say that he had met Amjad Kassem at the State Security branch where he is believed to have been taken initially. This same information has been given to the family by other recently released detainees.

An overseas relative has informed Amnesty International that on the basis of information from another released detainee, the family believes Amjad Kassem may have been moved to another State Security detention facility in Damascus in early August.

The reasons for Amjad Kassem's arrest remain unclear. He had been previously arrested and charged with an offence related to inciting people to close their shops to attend demonstrations. His family believe these charges are unfounded as he went to no demonstration, and did not close his own business. If he is held in connection with such allegations, then he is a prisoner of conscience, who should be released immediately and unconditionally.

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

- Urging the Syrian authorities to tell Amjad Kassem's family of his whereabouts and legal status without delay;
- Urging them to ensure that he is granted immediate access to his family and a lawyer of his choice, and all necessary medical treatment;
- Calling on them to release him immediately and unconditionally if – as appears to be the case – he is held solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 18 SEPTEMBER 2012 TO:**

President

Bashar al-Assad  
 Presidential Palace, al-Rashid Street  
 Damascus,  
 Syrian Arab Republic  
 Fax: +963 11 332 3410 (keep trying)

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Minister of Defence

His Excellency 'Imad al-Fraj  
 Ministry of Defence, Omayyad Square  
 Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic  
 Fax: +963 11 666 2460 (keep trying)

**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 6253 (keep trying)

**Salutation: Your Excellence**

### **Please send copies to diplomatic representatives of the Russian Federation accredited to your country, as below:**

Name Address 1 Fax Fax number Email Email address

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 147/12. Further information:  
[www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/050/2012/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/050/2012/en)

**AMNESTY  
 INTERNATIONAL**



# URGENT ACTION

## AMJAD KASSEM SEEN IN DETENTION

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Amjad Kassem had been arrested previously. He was on his way to travel to Dubai in his capacity as an IT business-owner on 1 April 2012 when he was first told he was under a travel ban, which had apparently come into force in March the same year. His passport was confiscated at the airport and he was told to go to a branch of the security forces in Damascus for a "passport release form". He went to the branch on 2 April and was not heard from again until he appeared before a criminal court on 11 April after which he was released. His family had asked the authorities about him repeatedly, but were told nothing. They were able to find out through unofficial channels that he was being held at one of the State Security branches in Damascus. He did not have access to a lawyer during the nine days of his detention.

Thousands of suspected opponents of the government have been arrested since protests broke out in February 2012 and many, if not most, are believed to have been tortured and otherwise ill-treated. Amnesty International has the names of more than 470 people reported to have died in custody during this period and has documented many cases of torture or other ill-treatment. See "*I wanted to die*": Syria's torture survivors speak out <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/016/2012/en>.

Amnesty International has also received many reports of people like Amjad Kassem, apparently subjected to enforced disappearance, where state officials have provided their families with no information on their fate: most are believed to have been arrested by the security forces. Some have been released after months of secret, incommunicado detention, others remain missing..

Although the vast majority of the human rights abuses documented by Amnesty International have been committed by the state's armed forces and pro-government *shabiha* militias, abuses have also been committed by armed opposition groups, including the torture and killing of captured soldiers and *shabiha* as well as the kidnapping and killing of people known or suspected to support or work with the government and its forces. Amnesty International condemns without reservation such abuses and has called on the leadership of all armed opposition groups in Syria to state publicly that such acts are prohibited. and do all within their power to ensure that opposition forces put an immediate end to them.

In light of the systematic and widespread human rights abuses, crimes against humanity and possible war crimes documented by Amnesty International (see for example *Deadly Reprisals: Deliberate killings and other abuses by Syria's armed forces*, Index MDE 24/041/2012, June 2012, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/041/2012/en>), the organization is continuing to call for the situation in Syria to be referred to the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, as well as an international arms embargo aimed at halting the flow of weapons to the Syrian government, and an assets freeze on President Bashar al-Assad and his close associates. The organization is also calling on states considering supplying weapons to the armed opposition to have in place the necessary mechanisms to ensure the material supplied is not used to commit human rights abuses and/or war crimes.

Name: Amjad Kassem

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 147/12 Index: MDE 24/070/2012 Issue Date: 7 August 2012