

URGENT ACTION

LOUAY HUSSEIN RISKS UNFAIR PRISON SENTENCE

Political activist Louay Hussein is being tried on charges of “weakening national sentiment” and “weakening the morale of the nation”. His second hearing will be held on 9 February, when his family expect he will be sentenced.

Louay Hussein was brought to trial before the criminal court in Damascus on 4 February on charges of “weakening national sentiment” and “weakening the morale of the nation”. According to a local contact, in his first hearing that day, Louay Hussein rejected the charges and cited the right to freedom of expression enshrined in the Syrian constitution and national laws. His lawyer asked the public prosecution to present evidence that would support the charges; the judge ordered a second hearing to take place on 9 February, when the public prosecution is expected to present evidence.

Louay Hussein, the head of political movement Building the Syrian State and an outspoken opposition writer, had been arrested on 12 November 2014 when he tried to cross the border to Lebanon. He is being held in Adra prison during his trial. The charges of “weakening national sentiment” and “weakening the morale of the nation” are based on an article Louay Hussein published on 24 June 2014, in which he wrote that the “Syrian state is falling apart and collapsing”. The charges are commonly brought against peaceful political activists and human rights defenders. Louay Hussein risks facing a long prison term on trumped-up charges.

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

- Calling on the authorities to release Louay Hussein immediately and unconditionally as he is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression;
- Urging them to ensure that he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 19 MARCH 2015 TO:

Permanent Representative to the UN
Bashar Ja'afari, Ambassador
Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
820 Second Avenue, 15th Floor
New York, NY 10017, USA
Fax: +1 212 983 4439
E-mail: exexec.syria@gmail.com
Salutation: Your Excellency

President
Bashar al-Assad
Fax: +963 11 332 3410 (keep trying)
(If fax does not go through, please
include your message to the president in
an email to the Ambassador, asking for it
to be forwarded)
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:
Minister of Interior
Major General Mohamad Ibrahim al-Shaar
Fax: +963 11 311 0554
(If fax does not go through, please
include your message to the Minister of
Interior in an email to the Ambassador,
asking for it to be forwarded)

Also send copies to 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 289/14. Further information:

<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/049/2014/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since the start of the crisis in Syria, Syrian government forces, pro-government militias and non-state armed groups have systematically targeted peaceful political activists, human rights defenders and humanitarian aid workers. Thousands of civilians are reported to have been arrested, detained, abducted, tortured and otherwise ill-treated merely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and freedom of association; or for providing medical care and humanitarian assistance to civilians. Thousands of civilians are also reported to have been held incommunicado, or subjected to enforced disappearance: their families are never told what has happened to them. For an insight into the international campaign that calls for the release of all those arbitrarily detained, see: Free Syria's Silenced Voices (<http://free-syrian-voices.org>).

Louay Hussein is the head of a movement he co-founded in Damascus in September 2011 called Building the Syrian State. The movement's main objective is to create a democratic civil state that ensures freedom of speech and association, social justice, equality and good governance. The movement is also involved in developing an economic programme based on neo-liberal economic reforms. The movement advocates a peaceful political transition and is against arming the opposition.

Name: Louay Hussein

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 289/14 Index: MDE 24/008/2015 Issue Date: 6 February 2015