

URGENT ACTION

ARRESTED PROTESTORS REPORT TORTURE

Fifty-two people detained in connection with continuing popular protests in Syria have been released; six of them have been charged and face trial. Four others are still detained but no longer held incommunicado, while five continue to be held incommunicado and the status and whereabouts of 76 others remain unknown. Hundreds of protestors are believed to be detained incommunicado at unknown locations across Syria, amid reports of torture and other ill-treatment.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad pledged for a second time on 15 April to release all protest-related detainees, except those accused of committing crimes “against the nation and the citizens”, but hundreds of protestors are believed still to be held and to be at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

Those recently detained include: **Mohammed Zaid Mastou**, a journalist with dual Syrian–Norwegian nationality who is reported to have been assaulted by security officials who took him from an internet cafe on 6 April; **Khaled Sid Mohand**, an Algerian freelance journalist who has contributed to *Le Monde*, who was arrested on 9 April; **Ahmed Ma'touq**, a political activist arrested on 10 April; **Mohammed Dia'a al-Din Daghmash**, a human rights activist arrested on 16 April by Military Security officials, and **Mahmoud 'Issa**, a human rights activist detained by Political Security officials on 19 April. They may be prisoners of conscience. They are at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

The five detainees referred to in the Urgent Action of 23 March and update of 30 March who continue to be detained incommunicado are **Bara'ah Kalziyeh**, **Mohammed Mounir al-Faqir**, **Mohammed Darwich**, **Usama Qashou'** and **Ibrahim Qashou'**.

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

- Expressing concern about the continuing detentions despite President Assad's instructions on 25 March and 15 April that all those detained in connection with the protests are to be released;
- Calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience, and for all other detainees to be either released or brought to trial on recognizable charges and in full conformity with international fair trial standards and without recourse to the death penalty;
- Urging the Syrian authorities to ensure that all detainees are protected against torture or other ill-treatment, are granted immediate access to their families, lawyers of their choosing and any medical treatment they may need.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 2 JUNE 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. This is the second update of UA 87/11. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/014/2011/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Popular protests in Syria have intensified in the last few weeks and there have been increasing calls by protestors in cities such as Dera'a and Homs for fundamental changes to the present political system and the domination of President al-Assad's Ba'ath Party. In the face of such demands and the pressure imposed by the growing tide of protest that has spread across Syria, despite ongoing repression and shootings of protestors, on 21 April the national state of emergency was finally lifted after being in force continuously for the past 48 years. The government said it would issue a new law on the right to peaceful protest, but the details of this are not yet available. However, it appears that these changes may be "too little too late" to end the cycle of protests and demands for change.

Since 15 March at least 238 people have been killed and many others injured in Damascus and other cities and towns, including Dera'a, al-Tall, al-Samamayn, Homs, Latakia, Baniyas, Duma, many of them as a result of excessive, including lethal, force by the security forces. Hundreds of people have been arrested; many of these have been tortured or assaulted according to Syrian human rights NGOs, particularly in Dera'a, Duma and Baniyas that have witnessed large scale demonstrations. One human rights activist has told Amnesty International that a hospital doctor working in Baniyas reported on 4 April that he had seen 30 men who had recently been released, many of whom had sustained broken bones, had bruising and, in some case, alleged that they had been tortured by having sticks forced into their anuses.

Amnesty International received a video documenting the arrest of men from al-Baydah village on 12 April:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjZ-kcLjeUE&feature=youtu.be&skipconinter=1>

Amnesty International also received a number of videos of men, including children, showing bruises and injuries apparently caused by torture: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvTafrhLAik&NR=1>, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mXLOfeLK1gk>, <http://img818.imageshack.us/g/814y.jpg/>

In addition to protestors those held also include bloggers, lawyers and journalists. Amnesty International has been able to verify the fate of 142 of the detainees who were arrested between 8 and 28 March; 57 were released between 20 March and 16 April, six of whom have been charged with offences and are awaiting trial.

Those released include Duha Hassan, a woman protestor, and Mohammed Radwan, an Egyptian-American engineer, both released on 1 April; Mohammed al-Khatib, released in April; Hussein 'Issa, a lawyer, released on 3 April; Abu Baker Ayoub Sha'ban, released on 5 April, Hussein al-Labwani and Mahmoud al-Ghorani, released on charge on 5 and 6 April respectively; and Ahmad Hudaifa, a blogger released on 14 April.

'Abd al-Hakim Mukareb, Mohammed 'Amer al-Khalid, Mohammed Ahmed Houriyeh and Ahmed Tayseer Hamoud remain in prison but are no longer held incommunicado. They have been charged with offences and may be tried before either the Military or Criminal Courts. Amnesty International is still verifying the details of their charges and where they are being held.

Nidal al-Sheikh Hamoudeh, Suleiman Nahili and Tamer al-Jahamani, three lawyers previously mentioned in the Urgent Action update of 30 March are among the 76 detainees whose situation remains unclear; they may still be held in incommunicado detention.

Further information on UA: 87/11 Index: MDE 204/0016/2011 Issue Date: 21 April 2011

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