

URGENT ACTION

SYRIAN ACTIVIST HELD INCOMMUNICADO

Syrian civil society activist Amjad Baiazy has been held incommunicado since his arrest at Syria's Damascus International Airport on 12 May. Amnesty International believes that he may be a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression. He is at serious risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

Amjad Baiazy, a Syrian citizen, was arrested while about to board a flight to the United Kingdom, where he formerly studied and was planning to reside. His family in Syria have had no contact with him since his arrest but it appears that he is being detained by State Security, a branch of the Syrian security police, in Damascus. The authorities have disclosed no reason for his arrest, as far as Amnesty International is aware, and no charges are known to have been brought against him.

Amjad Baiazy's arrest and detention is probably linked to the current violent government clampdown on public protests which has seen hundreds of people killed by the security forces since mid-March. The authorities have carried out mass arrests of real and suspected opponents, protestors and dissidents, hundreds of whom remain detained incommunicado and have been subjected to enforced disappearances. Many have reported torture and other ill-treatment after their release, heightening concerns for Amjad Baiazy's safety.

Amjad Baiazy's civil society activities included working with Medecins Sans Frontiers (MSF) in 2007 and acting as an international observer and interpreter for the International Mission for Iraqi Elections (IMIE) in 2005 for elections to Iraq's Council of Representatives.

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

- Expressing concern at the arrest and incommunicado detention of Amjad Baiazy and urging his immediate and unconditional release if he is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful exercise of freedom of expression or other human rights;
- Asking for confirmation of his place of detention, the reason for his arrest and his legal status, and calling for him to be fully protected against 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 and 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>.

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