

# URGENT ACTION

## KURDISH POLITICAL ACTIVIST AT RISK OF TORTURE

**Kurdish political activist and human rights lawyer, Sabri Mirza, has been held at an unknown location following his arrest in Qamishly, northern Syria, on 13 June. He is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment and may be a prisoner of conscience detained solely for peacefully expressing his political views.**

**Sabri Mirza** was arrested and handed over to Political Security forces on 13 June after the local police department in Qamishly summoned him, allegedly to discuss lifting his long-standing travel ban. While detained at the police station, he was allowed to call a friend to bring him medication for the diabetes and heart disease from which he suffers. Sabri Mirza phoned his friend again on 15 June around 4am to tell him that the security forces were taking him to Damascus, the capital, imminently. He has been held incommunicado at an unknown location since then.

The charges against Sabri Mirza are not known but Amnesty International believes he may have been targeted due to the senior position he holds within the unauthorized Kurdish Yekiti Party in Syria. According to sources within the party, Sabri Mirza recently co-authored a statement addressed to the Syrian authorities declining their request for dialogue with Kurdish political parties. The statement emphasized that dialogue would only be possible if the security forces refrained from further violence against peaceful protesters.

Sabri Mirza, 60 years old, who is married and the father of nine children, is a prominent human rights lawyer and has regularly provided legal representation to Kurdish activists targeted by the Syrian authorities. He has participated in peaceful demonstrations in Qamishly which have taken place over the past few months. His arrest and detention could be linked to the current government clampdown on public protests and suspected opposition figures. Reports of torture and other ill-treatment in detention heighten the concern for Sabri Mirza's safety. Sabri Mirza suffers from diabetes and heart disease and requires monitoring, guaranteed access to medication and must follow a specific diet. It is not known whether he is provided with the medication and diet he requires.

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

- Expressing concern that Sabri Mirza is being detained incommunicado and at unknown location, asking for information regarding his place of detention, the reason for his arrest and his legal status, and calling for him to be fully protected from torture and other ill-treatment, allowed contact with his family and a lawyer of his choice, and provided with regular medication and any medical attention he requires;
- Expressing concern that Sabri Mirza is being detained solely for peacefully exercising his right to express his political views and noting that, if this is the case, Amnesty International would consider him a prisoner of conscience and call for his immediate and unconditional release;
- 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 to safeguard them from torture and other ill-treatment.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 29 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 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.** Check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since popular protests calling for political reform in Syria began to be violently repressed in mid-March, more than 1,000 people, including children, are believed to have been killed. Many of them appear to have been killed as a result of the security forces using live ammunition on peaceful protests or during military operations by the Syrian army in a number of cities. Thousands of others have been arrested by the Syrian army and security forces, and hundreds remain detained incommunicado, despite a "general amnesty" that was issued on 31 May. Please see <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/syria-must-release-all-prisoners-conscience-under-amnesty-2011-06-02>

The arrests have targeted people perceived to have organized or openly supported the 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. Amnesty International has documented accounts of torture and other ill-treatment reported by some recently released detainees.

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