

URGENT ACTION

ARRESTED SYRIAN AT RISK OF TORTURE

Syrian man Mahmoud Saber Sabra was arrested on 19 February by men in civilian clothing believed to be members of the Syrian security forces. He has been detained incommunicado since then and is in real danger of torture and other ill-treatment.

According to a local contact, **Mahmoud Saber Sabra** was forced into a car by three armed men in civilian clothing on 19 February after he left his house in Jaramana, a neighbourhood under the control of the Syrian authorities south of Damascus, the capital. According to unofficial sources within the security forces he was then taken to a Military Intelligence detention facility in al-Saida Zainab, also south of Damascus, where he may have been tortured or otherwise ill-treated. He is now believed to be held at the Palestine Branch of Military Intelligence - a detention centre in Damascus. However, this is unconfirmed and his family have not seen or heard from him since his arrest.

It is not clear why he was arrested. According to Amnesty International's contact, he is not involved in any kind of civil society activism but his family fear that it could be due to his brother's participation in the political opposition delegation attending the peace talks in Geneva that took place in January and February 2014. While a number of them are still detained, six members of Mahmoud Saber Sabra's extended family are reported to have died in the custody of the Syrian security forces since the start of the crisis in March 2011, heightening fears for his safety.

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

- Urging the authorities to reveal the whereabouts of Mahmoud Saber Sabra without delay, and grant him immediate access to his family, lawyer and any medical attention he may require;
- Calling on them to release Mahmoud Saber Sabra unless he is charged promptly with a recognizably criminal offence and tried in accordance with international fair trial standards;
- Urging them to ensure that Mahmoud Saber Sabra is protected from torture and other ill-treatment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 18 APRIL 2014 TO:

President

Bashar al-Assad

Fax: +963 11 332 3410 (keep trying)

(If voice answers, say "Fax". Fax is the only reliable communication method; please do not send letters)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Interior

Major General Mohamad Ibrahim al-Shaar

Fax: +963 11 311 0554

(If voice answers, say "Fax". Fax is the only reliable communication method; please do not send letters)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Permanent Representative to the UN

Bashar Ja'afari

Ambassador Extraordinary and

Plenipotentiary

820 Second Avenue, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10017

Fax: +1 212 983 4439

E-mail: exesec.syria@gmail.com

syrianmission@verizonmail.com

Salutation: Your Excellency

Where appropriate, please also send copies to the Syrian and Russian 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.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mahmoud Saber Sabra is a student of Arabic language at the University of Damascus and also works for the Damascus city administration.

For an insight into the widespread torture and other ill-treatment in Syria's detention centres, see *I wanted to die: Syria's torture survivors speak out* (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/016/2012/en>). Thousands are reported to have died in the custody of the Syrian security forces since the unrest began. Amnesty International documented this practice in the report *Deadly detention: Deaths in custody amid popular protest in Syria* (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/035/2011/en>).

While the majority of the abuses have been committed by government forces, serious human rights abuses, including war crimes, have been committed by armed opposition groups, including some affiliated to al-Qa'ida and some affiliated to the Free Syria Army, and these have escalated in recent months. Armed opposition groups have increasingly resorted to summary killings of members of the various government security forces, pro-government militias, suspected informers or collaborators, members of rival armed opposition groups and members of minority communities perceived by members of armed opposition groups as loyal to President Bashar al-Assad such as Shi'a or Alawite Muslims. Armed opposition groups have also carried out indiscriminate attacks leading to civilian casualties, used children in hostilities, tortured or otherwise ill-treated captives, issued sectarian threats and carried out attacks against minority communities perceived as pro-government, and abducted and held hostages. See *Syria: Summary killings and other abuses by armed opposition groups*, issued on 14 March 2013 (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE24/008/2013/en>) and *Syria: Rule of fear: ISIS abuses in detention in Northern Syria*, issued on 19 December 2013 (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/063/2013/en>).

Name: Mahmoud Saber Sabra

Gender m/f: m

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