

# URGENT ACTION

## SYRIAN JOURNALIST AND BROTHER HELD IN LIBYA

**A Syrian journalist and her brother have been detained incommunicado in Libya since 28 March and are at risk of torture or other ill-treatment. She is accused of “communicating with enemy bodies during war time”. She is a prisoner of conscience, who should be released immediately and unconditionally.**

At 3am on 28 March, a group of armed men in plain clothes entered the home of Rana al-Aqbani in Tripoli, the capital of Libya. They searched the apartment and confiscated all mobile phones, a computer and personal documents. They took away the 28 year-old journalist Rana al-Aqbani, and her younger brother Hani al-Aqbani without providing any reason for their arrest. They have since been detained incommunicado.

Rana al-Aqbani's relatives in Syria did not know that she was arrested until 31 March when they saw video footage of her being interviewed on Libyan state television while in detention. During the interview, which was aggressive and conducted like a form of interrogation, it became clear that she is being detained solely for her views regarding the need to change the political system in Libya and her contacts with people in parts of the country controlled by those opposed to Libyan leader Colonel M'uammar al-Gaddafi. She said she had been told by an “officer” that she is accused of “communicating with enemy bodies during war time”. It remains unclear why Rana al-Aqbani's brother was arrested with her.

During the interview, the presenter blamed Rana al-Aqbani and “those like her” for the recent airstrikes on Libya by coalition forces, accusing them of spreading rumours and disseminating inaccurate information about the Libyan authorities' repression of popular protests and other human rights violations. It also became clear during the interview that her arrest came after “recordings”, apparently official bugging of her private telephone conversations.

Despite the aggressive nature of the interview, Rana al-Aqbani admitted that she had been in contact with people who oppose Libya's political system and said she supported the aspirations of the peaceful protesters who had taken to the streets to call for change. She said: “We got enthusiastic after the revolutions in Tunisia and in Egypt; and we hoped that change would come...change for the best...[for Libya] to be transformed into a country of institutions”.

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

- Calling on the Libyan authorities to immediately reveal the whereabouts of Rana and Hani al-Aqbani; ensure that they have unimpeded access to their family, lawyers and diplomatic representatives; and guarantee that they are protected from any torture or other ill-treatment; and
- Calling on the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Rana al-Aqbani as she seems to be detained solely for peacefully expressing her views; and to clarify the legal status of Hani al-Aqbani. Hani al-Aqbani should also be released unless charged with a recognizably criminal offense.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 16 MAY 2011 TO:**

#### Leader of the Revolution

Colonel Mu'ammar Al-Gaddafi

Office of the Leader of the Revolution,  
Tripoli, Great Socialist People's Libyan  
Arab Jamahiriya

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

#### Gaddafi Development Foundation

Executive Director

El Fatah Tower, 5th Floor B No.57  
PO Box 1101, Tripoli  
Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab  
Jamahiriya

Fax: +218 21 3350263

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



# URGENT ACTION

## SYRIAN JOURNALIST AND BROTHER HELD IN LIBYA

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Rana al-Aqbani has been living in Libya since she was nine years old; and has worked in journalism for the past year. She was employed at the Libya Press agency, an outlet of the al-Ghad Corporation affiliated with Saif al-Islam al-Gaddafi, the son of Colonel Mu'ammarr al-Gaddafi, until some 22 journalists were briefly arrested in November 2010; the agency's office was shut down in December 2010. Most recently, she has worked for the state *Al-Shams* newspaper, but has not been going to work since the unrest started in mid-February.

Many people have been subjected to enforced disappearance by forces loyal to Colonel Mu'ammarr al-Gaddafi since the current unrest began in Libya in mid-February 2011, including dozens who were arrested and detained in eastern Libya and are believed to have been transferred to the Tripoli area that are controlled by al-Gaddafi forces. Others have disappeared in Tripoli or other areas controlled by Colonel Mu'ammarr al-Gaddafi. These detainees and disappeared persons are at grave risk of torture and other serious human rights abuses. The true number is impossible to calculate as the authorities in Tripoli generally do not divulge information about people they are detaining and because many areas of the country are not accessible for independent reporting; indeed, a number of Libyan and international journalists have been detained and ill-treated for seeking to report from areas in which al-Gaddafi forces have carried out arrests and attacks against civilians, and some are also still missing and unaccounted for having been detained by al-Gaddafi forces

Gross and systematic human rights violations have been committed with total impunity throughout the more than 40 years of Colonel Mu'ammarr al-Gaddafi's rule in Libya, including arbitrary arrest and detention without trial, enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment, unfair trials and extrajudicial executions. The Libyan authorities have not tolerated dissent, including peaceful criticism of calls for change, and have routinely locked up those who have sought to exercise their right to freedom of expression.

UA: 101/11 Index: MDE 19/014/2011 Issue Date: 4 April 2011

**AMNESTY**  
**INTERNATIONAL**

