

URGENT ACTION

PROTESTORS RELEASED BUT MANY STILL AT RISK

Five protestors whose cases were included in the Urgent Action of 23 March were released on 24 March; two others remain in prison facing charges but are no longer held incommunicado. However, six detainees continue to be held incommunicado detention while the status and whereabouts of the remaining 79 is unclear; some or all may still be in detention. In addition, 49 other protestors are now also being detained incommunicado at unknown locations across Syria in connection with the recent protests, and are also now at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

According to Syrian human rights organizations, 48 men and one woman were arrested by security forces between 23 and 28 March in Damascus, the capital, and in al-Raqqa, al-Zabadani, Baniyas, Dayr al-Zor, Douma, and Homs in connection with continuing popular protests. This increases the number of those known to remain in detention despite the government's announcement that all those detained in connection with the protests are to be released by order of the President. All detainees who are held incommunicado are at serious risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

Those held include protestors, bloggers, lawyers and journalists, many of whom may be prisoners of conscience detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association. They include: **Ahmad Hudaifa**, a blogger aged 28, who was arrested on 23 March apparently for supporting the protests on Facebook (for more information see UA 40/11 <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/008/2011/en>), and four lawyers who were arrested between 25 and 27 March, **Hussein 'Issa**, **Nidal al-Sheikh Hamoudeh**, **Suleiman Nahili** and **Tamer al-Jahamani**.

The six detainees named in the Urgent Action of 23 March who continue to be detained incommunicado are: **Bara'ah Kalziyeh**, **Mohammed al-Khatib**, **Mohammed Mounir al-Faqir**, **Mohammed Darwich**, **Mohammed Ahmed Houriyeh** and **Abu Baker Ayoub Sha'ban**.

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

- Expressing concern about these continuing detentions despite President Assad's instruction 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 11 MAY 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 Sa'id Mohamed Samour
 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 first update of UA 87/11. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/013/2011/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since protests began on 15 March, at least 99 people are reported to have been killed and many others injured in Damascus and other centres, including al-Tall, al-Samamayn, Homs, Latakia and Dera'a. The Syrian authorities have also made sweeping arrests. Although the total number of those arrested remains unknown Amnesty International has published the names of 92 people who are reported to have been held incommunicado in connection with the protests, based on reports from Syrian human rights organizations and detainees' relatives.

On 25 March the Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) announced that all those detained for their involvement in the protests had been released on 24 March 2011 on the instructions of the President, but did not disclose their names. On 27 March the government also announced its intention to lift the state of emergency law that has been continuously in force since 1963 but gave no further details.

Syrian human rights organizations have reported that most of those arrested in and around Dera'a between 18 and 24 March were released. One of those released, told Amnesty International that all those detained – numbering up to one hundred - had been held in the city's Military Security branch and were released at 9 pm on 24 March. Some were held only for a few hours, others for several days. Some were beaten in detention by members of the security forces.

The five other detainees who are confirmed to have been released on the evening of 24 March are **Sabr Darwich**, a journalist, **Hussein Mustafa 'Ali**, **Mohammed Adib Matar**, **'Issa Masalmeh**, a political activist, and **Lo'ay Hussein**, a writer. Two others, **Mahmud al-Ghorani** and **Hussein al-Labwani**, appeared before Damascus Investigation Judge on 27 March and were charged with "weakening national sentiment" and "causing sectarian and racial strife"; they were then transferred to 'Adra prison.

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