

# URGENT ACTION

## MOTHER AND CHILDREN HELD INCOMMUNICADO

**A Syrian family, including two young children and a pregnant woman, have been held incommunicado since 15 May at the Air Force Intelligence branch in al-Mezzeh, Damascus. They appear to be prisoners of conscience, held in an attempt to place pressure on a wanted family member. They may be at risk of torture and ill-treatment.**

**Mahmoud Hamada**, aged 10 and **Osama Hamada**, aged 8, were arrested from their home in Aqraba, in the suburbs of Damascus on 15 May 2012, along with their mother **Malika al-Khateeb** who is six months pregnant. Five other family members present in the house at the time were also arrested: they are the children's grandfather **Mahmoud Rida Hamada**; grandmother **Samiya al-Jad**; uncle **Mohamed Hamada**; aunt **Noor al-Habyan**; and cousin **Adam Hamada**, aged 3.

Following the arrests, several of the town's elders went to ask for their release at the Air Force Intelligence branch in al-Mezzeh neighbourhood of Damascus, but were told the family would only be released if Malika al-Khateeb's husband, Said Mahmoud Hamada, hands himself in to the authorities. Said Mahmoud Hamada is reportedly accused by the Syrian authorities of "belonging to a terrorist group", and is currently in hiding. On 22 May, Adam Hamada was released and collected from the Air Force Intelligence branch by his maternal grandmother and uncle.

On the basis of the available evidence, Amnesty International believes that the detained family are prisoners of conscience, held solely because of their relation to Said Mahmoud Hamada. There are further concerns for the well-being of Malika al-Khateeb as she is six months pregnant and Samiya al-Jad, who needs regular medication as she suffers from diabetes and high blood pressure.

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

- Expressing concern that Malika al-Khateeb, Mahmoud Hamada, Osama Hamada, Mahmoud Rida Hamada, Samiya al-Jad, Mohamed Hamada, and Noor al-Habyan appear to be prisoners of conscience arrested solely for their relation to Said Mahmoud Hamada;
- Calling for them to be released immediately and unconditionally;
- Urging the authorities to ensure that, for as long as they are in detention, they are protected from torture and other ill-treatment, allowed immediate contact with their family and a lawyer of their choice, and provided with any medical care they require.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 13 JULY 2012 TO:**

#### President

Bashar al-Assad  
Presidential Palace, al-Rashid Street  
Damascus,  
Syrian Arab Republic  
Fax: +963 11 332 3410 (keep trying)

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

#### Minister of Interior

His Excellency Major General Mohamad  
Ibrahim al-Shaar, Ministry of Interior,  
'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar Street  
Damascus,  
Syrian Arab Republic  
Fax: +963 11 211 9578 (keep trying)

**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 6253 (keep trying)

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**Also send copies to 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

On 15 May 2012, security forces reportedly raided Said Mahmoud Hamada's workshop, causing him to flee from his home and go into hiding. His eight relatives were arrested later that day when security forces raided their home in search of Said Mahmoud Hamada. An unofficial source reportedly informed the town's elders that the family are being pressured to appear on state-TV and 'confess' that Said Mahmoud Hamada is a member of al-Qaeda and is responsible for a bombing in the al-Qazaz neighbourhood of Damascus on 10 May 2012.

Pro-reform demonstrations began sporadically in February 2011 but became larger and more frequent after the first killings of demonstrators the following month. Initially largely peaceful, the Syrian authorities responded in the most brutal manner in their efforts to suppress them. In the year since then, although peaceful demonstrations have continued, the unrest has turned increasingly violent, with armed opposition groups, many loosely under the umbrella of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) carrying out attacks mainly against Syrian security forces. Abuses by opposition forces have also been reported including torture or killing of captured members of the army and security forces, including the pro-government gangs known as *shabiha* and perceived supporters of the government and suspected informers. Amnesty International has obtained the names of more than 9,900 people reported to have died or been killed in relation to the unrest since mid-March 2011.

Thousands of suspected opponents of the Syrian government have been arrested since protests broke out and many, if not most, are believed to have been tortured and otherwise ill-treated. Amnesty International has the names of more than 380 people reported to have died in custody in this period and has documented many cases of torture or other ill-treatment. For further information about torture and other ill-treatment of detainees in Syria, see "I wanted to die": Syria's torture survivors speak out <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/016/2012/en>. Among those who have died in custody are at least 18 children, some as young as 13 years old. The bodies of some of these children bore marks of injuries which indicated they may have been subjected to torture. For further information, please see *Syria: Deadly detention: Deaths in custody amid popular protest in Syria*, Index: MDE 24/035/2011, 31 August 2011 (<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/035/2011/en>).

Amnesty International has also received many reports of people apparently subjected to enforced disappearance, where state officials have failed to provide their families with any information on the fate of these people, most of whom are believed to have been arrested by the security forces. Despite the Syrian government's acceptance on 27 March 2012 of the six-point plan drawn up by the Joint Special Envoy for the United Nations and the Arab League on Syria, Kofi Annan, and the ceasefire agreement of 12 April, Amnesty International has continued to receive reports of unlawful killings, arrests and continuing detention of people in conditions amounting to enforced disappearance.

Since April 2011, Amnesty International has documented systematic and widespread human rights violations which amount to crimes against humanity, and has called for the situation in Syria to be referred to the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, as well as an international arms embargo on Syria, and an assets freeze on President Bashar al-Assad and his close associates.

**Go to the interactive Eyes on Syria map ([www.eyesonsyria.org](http://www.eyesonsyria.org)) to see where human rights violations are being committed in Syria, and Amnesty International's global activism to seek justice.**

Name: Malika al-Khateeb, Mahmoud Hamada, Osama Hamada, Mahmoud Rida Hamada, Samiya al-Jad, Mohamed Hamada, and Noor al-Habyan

Gender m/f: Mahmoud Hamada, Osama Hamada, Mahmoud Rida Hamada and Mohamed Hamada are male; Malika al-Khateeb, Samiya al-Jad and Noor al-Habyan are female.

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