

URGENT ACTION

TORTURE FEARS FOR DETAINEE IN SYRIA

Bassel Khartabil, a Palestinian man born and raised in Syria, has been detained incommunicado since his arrest in Damascus, Syria, on 15 March. There are fears for his safety as a local source claims he has been tortured and otherwise ill-treated.

According to a local source **Bassel Khartabil**, aged 31, was arrested on 15 March 2012 as he left work in the al-Mezzeh district of Damascus. It is believed that he was detained by individuals working for one of the various security forces operating in Syria. One week after his arrest, Bassel Khartabil was briefly brought to his home by some members of the security forces, who confiscated his computers and files. Amnesty International does not have information about the reasons for his arrest, but fears it may be connected to the ongoing unrest and armed conflict in Syria.

A few weeks later when relatives enquired about him, security officials at the Kafr Sousseh Military Intelligence branch confirmed that Bassel Khartabil was detained, without revealing his whereabouts, his state of health, or if charges had officially been brought against him. International human rights standards require that detainees' families are notified promptly after their arrest, and are allowed to communicate with detainees. Bassel Khartabil has also not been granted access to a lawyer, although international human rights standards require that detainees have access to a lawyer of their choice

A few weeks later, a released detainee later informed Bassel Khartabil's family that he was being held at the Military Intelligence Branch in Kafr Sousseh and had been tortured and otherwise ill-treated, heightening the concern for his safety. Bassel Khartabil is also diabetic and it is not known if he has access to medication he needs, has been provided with a diet that takes into account his diabetes or has been granted a proper medical assessment.

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

- Expressing concern that Bassel Khartabil has been detained incommunicado since 15 March, and urging the Syrian authorities to grant him immediate access to his family, a lawyer of his choice, and all necessary medical treatment;
- Calling on the Syrian authorities to release Bassel Khartabil, unless he is promptly charged with an internationally recognizable criminal offence and tried in proceedings that respect international fair trial standards;
- Calling on the authorities to ensure that Bassel Khartabil is protected from torture and other ill-treatment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 30 OCTOBER 2012 TO:

President

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

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Defence

His Excellency 'Imad al-Fraj
Ministry of Defence, Omayyad Square
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Fax: +963 11 223 7842

+963 11 666 2460

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

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**



URGENT ACTION

TORTURE FEARS FOR DETAINEE IN SYRIA

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Thousands of suspected opponents of the government have been arrested in Syria since protests broke out in February 2011 and many, if not most, are believed to have been tortured and otherwise ill-treated. Amnesty International has the names of more than 470 people reported to have died in custody during this period and has documented many cases of torture or other ill-treatment. See '*I wanted to die*': Syria's torture survivors speak out (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/016/2012/en>).

Since protests broke out, the situation has evolved into an internal armed conflict throughout much of the country. Although the vast majority of the human rights abuses documented by Amnesty International have been committed by the state's armed forces and pro-government *shabiha* militias, abuses have also been committed by armed opposition groups. This includes the torture and killing of captured soldiers and *shabiha* militia members as well as the abduction and killing of people known or suspected to support or work with the government and its forces, or the taking of civilians as hostages to try to negotiate prisoner swaps. Amnesty International condemns without reservation such abuses and has called on the leadership of all armed opposition groups in Syria to state publicly that such acts are prohibited and to do all in their power to ensure that opposition forces put an immediate stop to them.

Systematic and widespread human rights abuses, including crimes against humanity and possible war crimes have become rife in Syria, where civilians are the main victims. Amnesty International has documented numerous examples, most recently in documents such as *Civilians bearing the brunt in the battle for Aleppo*, Index: MDE 24/073/2012, 23 August 2012 (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/073/2012/en>). Other bodies such as the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic have made similar findings, including in their most recent report published on 15 August 2012.

In light of this, Amnesty International is continuing to call for the situation in Syria to be referred to the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. The organization is also calling for an international arms embargo aimed at halting the flow of weapons to the Syrian government, and an assets freeze on President Bashar al-Assad and his close associates. Additionally, states considering supplying weapons to the armed opposition should have in place the necessary mechanisms to ensure the material supplied is not used to commit human rights abuses and/or war crimes. The Syrian government should also allow the international independent commission of inquiry, and international human rights and humanitarian organizations, unfettered access to the country.

Name: Bassel Khartabil
Gender m/f: m

UA: 264/12 Index: MDE 24/076/2012 Issue Date: 18 September 2012