
Amnesty International

MONTHLY ACTION

ACTIVISM TEAM, Amnesty International UK
HRAC, 17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2A 3EA



July 2014

International Day of the Disappeared

Appeal for disappeared Syrian human rights lawyer

On the 2nd October 2012, Syrian human rights lawyer Khalil Ma'touq set off on a drive to work. He never arrived and his family have not seen him since.

Khalil Ma'touq's home is in Sahnaya, a suburb roughly 20km south of the centre of Damascus. His normal route to his office in the city takes him through a number of government-controlled checkpoints. Given Khalil's work as a human rights lawyer, there were immediate concerns that he had been arrested by government forces.

Khalil Ma'touq's family and lawyer have received various unconfirmed reports that Khalil was being held at a number of different branches of the security forces. The Syrian government have not responded to the family's requests for information on the whereabouts of Khalil Ma'touq. Following an official inquiry by a group of lawyers the government denied that they are holding Khalil Ma'touq.

Khalil Ma'touq has been a human rights lawyer for many years. He has defended hundreds of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, including at Syria's Supreme State Security Court. He is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for his peaceful and important human rights work.

According to Khalil Ma'touq's family, his health has greatly deteriorated over his period of detention.

30th August is International Day of the Disappeared, and this year we would like you to mark the occasion by taking action and demanding the immediate release of Khalil Ma'touq.



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GOT QUERIES OR WANT TO DO MORE?

If you have any queries about this action and for updates please contact iar@amnesty.org.uk
Download this action at www.amnesty.org.uk/groups

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Case Background Information

Appeal for disappeared Syrian human rights lawyer

Khalil Ma'touq, a member of Syria's Christian minority, has been a human rights lawyer for many years. He is the director of the Syrian Centre for Legal Studies and Research.

Khalil Ma'touq suffers from advanced lung disease caused by a chronic inflammatory condition, which means he has significant breathing difficulties. He takes regular medication and requires constant medical supervision. We are concerned about Khalil Ma'touq's health whilst in detention. According to what his friends and family have been told Khalil's health has deteriorated greatly throughout his time in detention. We are concerned that he may not be receiving the medical attention that he requires.

Khalil Ma'touq's family have received a number of unofficial tip offs indicating that Khalil Ma'touq has been held at a number of different government controlled detention centres in Damascus. Khalil Ma'touq's family and lawyers have requested information on his whereabouts on many occasions, but despite several requests the Syrian government continues to deny that they are detaining Khalil Ma'touq. This places the two men at risk of torture and other ill-treatment and extra judicial execution. Over one and a half years after their disappearance the whereabouts of Khalil Ma'touq and Mohhamed Thatha are still unknown.

General amnesty for prisoners

On 9th June 2014 President Bashar al-Assad issued a decree granting a 'general amnesty' for all crimes except 'acts of terrorism'. As part of this amnesty Khalil Ma'touq's daughter Ranim Ma'touq was released, having been detained since February 2014.

The Syrian government has announced such prisoner amnesties in the past, but these have so far failed to translate into the release of the many prisoners of conscience that remain behind bars.

Human rights lawyers in Syria

Human rights lawyers working in Syria face many challenges, and their situation has been worsened by the Syrian conflict. Syrian human rights lawyers face intimidation, threats, prosecution, arrest, and torture for carrying out their peaceful human rights work.

Syrian Conflict

Since protests began in Syria, hundreds, if not thousands, have been held in incommunicado detention without access to visits from family members or legal counsel. Many have been held in detention centres run by intelligence agencies. In many cases, families have reportedly been afraid to seek information about the whereabouts of detained relatives. Amnesty International fears many may have been held in conditions amounting to enforced disappearance. Keeping detainees in incommunicado detention has been a common practice in Syria for many years. Detainees held in incommunicado detention are particularly at risk of torture and other ill-treatment whilst in detention.

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What we would like you to do

Solidarity Photo action

We want you to stand in solidarity with Khalil Ma'touq and victims of enforced disappearance in Syria. We want you to take a picture of yourself holding a solidarity message. We will use your pictures to create a montage that we will share with Khalil Ma'touq's family. We will also use the photo montage when contacting the Syrian authorities on Khalil Ma'touq's case.

What to do:

1. Attached is the solidarity message. We have provided English versions and Arabic versions of the message, feel free to get creative and make your own message. Our suggested message we are using for this campaign is

Free Khalil Ma'touq

الحرية لخليل معتوق

2. Take a picture of yourself holding your solidarity message. We will be using these pictures to make a photo collage and as part of a petition, so we need as many pictures as possible. Please take individual photos where possible.
3. If you are taking pictures as part of a stall or event, please make sure that people are happy for the photo to be taken and that they are happy for the photo to be shared with Khalil Ma'touq's family.
4. Please email the photos to activism@amnesty.org.uk by 20th August.

Twitter action

If you are on social media, we will be launching a twitter action on the case of Khalil Ma'touq around the Day of the Disappeared. To take part keep an eye out on our Amnesty UK's social media channels around the 30th of August.

Want to do more?

If your group would like to work on Khalil Ma'touq's case on a long term basis or you would like more information and campaign materials on Syria please contact the Country Coordinator Hannah Slater (hannah.slater@amnesty.org.uk)

Please visit our website for further information on our Syria campaign www.amnesty.org.uk/syria

Free Khalil Ma'touq

الحرية لخليل معنوق