

FEARS FOR SYRIAN MAN HELD INCOMMUNICADO**SYRIA****Isma'il Othman al-Salihah (m)**

A Syrian man, aged 70, has been held incommunicado since 19 March, reportedly by Air Force Intelligence. He is believed to be detained in relation to his son's pro-reform activities. He is in poor health, and it is not known if he is receiving the daily medication he requires. He is at risk of torture and other ill treatment.

Isma'il Othman al-Salihah, from Maarat al-Numaan, in the north-western Idlib province, was arrested on 19 March 2012. An eye-witness told Isma'il Othman al-Salihah's son Ghassan al-Salihah, that his father was arrested at a temporary check-point near the city of Aleppo, known by locals to be controlled by the Air Force Intelligence.

Ghassan al-Salihah, who participated in pro-reform demonstrations and other activities, believes his father was arrested in relation to pro-reform activities by family members. Ghassan al-Salihah, who is not currently in Syria, was detained by State Security officials on 31 April 2011 in relation to his activities and was released without charge on 1 June 2011 in a general amnesty covering "all members of political movements, including the Muslim Brotherhood".

Isma'il Othman al-Salihah is a retired secondary school teacher and, according to his son, has not been politically active since pro-reform demonstrations began in 2011. If he was arrested solely in relation his son's activities, then he is a prisoner of conscience and should be immediately and unconditionally released. There is further concern for Isma'il Othman al-Salihah's well-being as he requires daily medication for diabetes and high blood pressure.

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

- * Expressing concern that Isma'il Othman al-Salihah has been held incommunicado since 19 March 2012 and that he is at risk of torture or other ill-treatment;
- * Calling on the Syrian authorities to allow him contact with his family, a lawyer of his choice and immediate and regular access to all necessary medical care;
- * Calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Isma'il Othman al-Salihah if he is held solely in connection with the activities of family members, otherwise he should be released unless he is to be promptly charged with an internationally recognizable criminal offence and tried promptly in accordance with fair trial standards.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 17 MAY 2012 TO: (Time difference = GMT + 2 hrs / BST + 1 hrs)

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

Ministry of Interior
His Excellency Major General
Mohamad Ibrahim al-Shaar
Minister of Interior
'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar Street
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Fax: +963 11 311 0554
Salutation: Your Excellency

Copies to
Minister of Justice
Judge Tayseer Qala Awwad
Minister of Justice
Al-Nasr Street
Damascus

Syrian Arab Republic
Fax: +963 11 666 2460
Email: moj@net.sy
Salutation: Your Excellency

PLEASE SEND COPIES OF YOUR APPEAL TO

His Excellency Dr Sami M Khiyami, Embassy of the Syrian Arab Republic, 8 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PH

Fax: 020 7235 4621 Website: <http://syremb.com>

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Largely peaceful pro-reform demonstrations began sporadically in February 2011 but picked up frequency and scale after the first killings of demonstrators the following month. The protests have been largely peaceful, yet the Syrian authorities have 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. Amnesty International has obtained the names of more than 7,600 people reported to have died or been killed during or in connection with the protests since mid-March 2011. Many are believed to have been shot by security forces using live ammunition while participating in peaceful protests or attending funerals of people killed in earlier protests. Members of the security forces have also been killed, some by defecting members of the army who have taken up arms against the government.

Thousands of people have been arrested, with many held incommunicado at unknown locations at which torture and other ill-treatment are reported to be rife. Over 300 people are reported to have died in custody in highly suspicious circumstances since 1 April 2011.

The Syrian state has multiple security and intelligence agencies in addition to even more opaque groups, often armed but not necessarily uniformed, who also carry out abductions, killings and other abuses in apparent coordination with, or at least approval of, state officials. Amnesty International has also received reports of armed individuals threatening, abusing and, in some cases, killing people perceived to be linked to or supportive of the state.

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 for an assets freeze on President Bashar al-Assad and his close associates.

Despite the Syrian government's acceptance on 27 March 2012 of the six-point plan by Kofi Annan, the Joint Special Envoy for the United Nations and the Arab League on Syria, Amnesty International has continued to receive reports of arrests and continuing detention of individuals in conditions amounting to enforced disappearance. The organization has received the names of 393 individuals killed since 27 March.

Amnesty International has previously documented cases of Syrian security forces arresting persons solely based on their family relations with people perceived as activists by the Syrian government. These include 'Abd al-Rahman Hammada and his brother Wa'el Hammada (Index: MDE 24/033/2011), 'Awad Jassim 'Abbas (Index MDE 24/037/2011) as well as 'Ali al-'Abdullah (Torture fear for dozens arrested in Damascus suburb, 18 July 2011, www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/syria-dozens-held-during-siege-damascus-suburb-2011-07-18).

PLEASE CHECK WITH THE INDIVIDUALS AT RISK PROGRAMME AT AIUK BEFORE SENDING APPEALS AFTER 17 MAY 2012

Individuals at Risk Programme, Amnesty International UK, 17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2A 3EA, 0207 033 1572, iar@amnesty.org.uk.