

URGENT ACTION

FOUR MEN ARRESTED, AT RISK OF TORTURE IN SYRIA

A Syrian man, Youssef al-Ammar, his nephews Suhaib al-Ammar and Iqbal al-Ammar and another relative, Bilal Koushan, were arrested on 24 November 2012 at their shared flat in Damascus. Since then they have been detained in conditions amounting to enforced disappearance and are at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

According to a local contact, members of the security forces arrived in the early hours of 24 November 2012 at the flat that **Youssef al-Ammar** shares with his nephews **Suhaib al-Ammar**, and **Iqbal al-Ammar**, and another relative, who was not present at the time. Suhaib al-Ammar and Iqbal al-Ammar's cousin **Bilal Koushan**, originally from the Syrian town of Dera'a, had been staying with his relatives in the flat. The same contact told Amnesty International that eyewitnesses later told the family that the four men had been taken away by members of the security forces.

The Syrian authorities have not notified the family regarding the men's detention, their current whereabouts or any charges against them. The reasons for their arrest are unknown. Iqbal al-Ammar had been briefly arrested once before in early 2012, while Suhaib al-Ammar had previously been detained from 18 November 2011 until 10 January 2012, when he was released without charge. (See: *Syrian student at risk of torture in detention* (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/080/2011/en>) and *Further information: Syrian student released after two months* (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/003/2012/en>). He later said that he had been tortured and otherwise ill-treated before he was released, increasing Amnesty International's concern that the four men are currently at risk of torture or other ill-treatment

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

- Expressing concern that Youssef al-Ammar, Suhaib al-Ammar, Iqbal al-Ammar and Bilal Koushan have been held incommunicado since 24 November 2012 in conditions amounting to enforced disappearance;
- Urging the Syrian authorities to ensure that they are protected from torture and other ill-treatment, allowed immediate contact with their families and a lawyer of their choice, and provided with all necessary medical care;
- Asking for clarification of their legal status, and calling on the authorities to release them if they are not to be charged with an internationally recognizable criminal offence, and tried according to international fair trial standards.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 18 FEBRUARY 2013 TO:

President

Bashar al-Assad

Fax: 011 963 11 332 3410 (keep trying)

(fax/phone line – say "Fax") (Fax is the only reliable communication method; please do not send letters)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Interior

Major General Mohamad Ibrahim al-Shaar

Fax: 011 963 11 311 0554

(fax/phone line – say "Fax") (Fax is the only reliable communication method; please do not send letters)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Walid al-Mu'allim

Fax: 011 963 11 214 6253 (keep trying)

(fax/phone line – say "Fax") (Fax is the only reliable communication method; please do not send letters)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Please send copies to diplomatic representatives of the Russian Federation accredited to your country, as below:

Ambassador Sergey I. Kislyak

Embassy of the Russian Federation

2650 Wisconsin Ave NW, Washington DC 20007

Phone: 1 202 298 5700 | Fax: 1 202 298 5735 | Email: russianembassy@mindspring.com

Twitter: @MID_RF for tweets in Russian, @MFA_Russia for tweets in English

Also send copies to:

Ambassador Dr Imad Moustapha

Embassy of the Syrian Arab Republic

2215 Wyoming Ave. NW, Washington DC 20008 USA

Phone: 1 202 232 6316 | Fax: 1 202 234 9548 -OR- 1 202 265 4585 -OR- 1 202 232 4357 | Email: info@syrembassy.net -OR-

consular@syrembassy.net

Please check with the AIUSA Urgent Action Office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Suhaib and Iqbal al-Ammar's father, Dr Mohamed al-Ammar, a peaceful advocate for democratic reform in Syria, has also been repeatedly arrested since the beginning of the unrest in Syria. For additional information on his last arrest, please see: *Reformist may be detained, risks torture* (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/036/2012/en>) and *Further information: Syrian democracy activist released* (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/051/2012/en>). He has published his calls widely over the internet and has given public speeches and attended conferences.

Thousands of suspected opponents of the government have been arrested in Syria since protests calling for political reform began in February 2011 and many, if not most, are believed to have been tortured or otherwise ill-treated. Amnesty International has the names of over 720 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*: (Index: MDE 24/016/2012, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/016/2012/en>).

Since protests began, the situation has evolved into an internal armed conflict in much of the country between the security forces and armed opposition groups intent on overthrowing the government. Systematic and widespread human rights abuses, including crimes against humanity and war crimes, have become rife, with civilians being the main victims. Amnesty International has documented numerous examples, most recently in documents such as *Syria: Indiscriminate attacks terrorize and displace civilians* (Index: MDE 24/078/2012) <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/078/2012/en>. Other bodies such as the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic have made similar findings. Amnesty International is calling on all sides in the conflict to abide by international humanitarian law and to protect civilians.

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.

Amnesty International is therefore 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 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.

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

Name: Youssef al-Ammar (m), Suhaib al-Ammar (m), Iqbal al-Ammar (m), Bilal Koushan (m)

Issues: Enforced Disappearance, Incommunicado Detention, Risk of ill-treatment

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