

URGENT ACTION

WOMAN ON TRIAL FOR ALLEGEDLY AIDING DISPLACED

A Syrian woman, Yara Faris, was arrested by Syrian State Security officers on 8 December 2013. She is held in 'Adra Prison, waiting to be tried by the Anti-Terrorism Court for allegedly assisting in the distribution of food and aid to displaced people.

According to a local contact, **Yara Faris** was stopped at a State Security checkpoint close to her home in the Damascus suburb of Sahnaya, on 8 December 2013. She did not have her ID on her at the time and returned home to collect it. While home, she apparently texted relatives to say she feared arrest. She was then seen being taken away by some of the people who operated the checkpoint.

Yara Faris was reportedly held at a State Security branch in Damascus for the first ten days of her detention. She was then brought before an investigating judge of a criminal court in Reef Dimashq ("Damascus countryside"), who decided to refer her case to the Anti-Terrorism Court and move her to 'Adra prison, where she is detained. She is accused of "financing acts of terrorism" under Article 4 of the 2012 Anti-Terrorism Law, apparently because she had been helping to provide food and assistance to internally displaced people who had fled the conflict elsewhere in the country. If she is prosecuted solely for providing humanitarian assistance to displaced civilians, Amnesty International would consider her a prisoner of conscience.

The investigating judge at the Anti-Terrorism Court recently decided not to question her, as she had already been questioned by the criminal court judge, but the case seems to be proceeding. Although she has access to her lawyers, her relatives have only been able to visit her twice: she has told them there is insufficient food for the large number of detainees at the prison. Only those who receive money from their families can obtain additional food.

Her husband, Maher Tahan, was subjected to enforced disappearance on 20 September 2012 when he returned with a delegation of the National Coalition for Democratic Change from an official visit to China.

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

- Calling on the Syrian authorities to drop the charges against Yara Faris that stem solely from her alleged involvement in providing humanitarian assistance;
- Urging them to release her or charge her promptly with a recognizably criminal offence not related to her humanitarian activities and tried in an ordinary court in proceedings that comply with international standards;
- Urging them to ensure that she is protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and is granted any medical attention she may require and sufficient food.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 13 MAY 2014 TO:

President

Bashar al-Assad

Fax: 011 963 11 332 3410 (keep trying)

(If voice answers, say "Fax". Fax is the only reliable communication method; please do not send letters)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice

Najm Hamad al-Ahmad

Fax: 011 963 11 666 2460

Email: moj@net.sy

Salutation: Your Excellency

Permanent Representative to the UN

Bashar Ja'afari, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

820 Second Avenue, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10017

Fax: 011 1 212 983 4439

E-mail: exesec.syria@gmail.com

Salutation: Your Excellency

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Yara Faris is reportedly sharing a large room with around 45 other women, some of whom have been convicted of criminal offences. Some of those women are apparently pregnant; some have given birth in prison, others are held with their children. There are apparently insufficient supplies of clothes and other personal necessities. The 1957 Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners call for those who have not been tried to be held separately from convicted prisoners.

Yara Faris' husband is a member of the National Coordination Body for Democratic Change, a mostly secular coalition of political groups and activists including leftists and Arab nationals that advocates a peaceful transition of power.

Name: Yara Faris (f)

Issues: Arbitrary arrest; Arbitrary detention; Human rights defenders; Ill-treatment

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