

# URGENT ACTION

## SYRIAN ACTIVIST AT SERIOUS RISK OF TORTURE

**Syrian activist, Anas al-Shogre, has been detained incommunicado since his arrest on the night of 14-15 May, apparently for calling for and leading protests in the coastal city of Baniyas, Syria. He is at serious risk of torture and other ill-treatment.**

According to a Syrian human rights activist, **Anas al-Shogre**, a 23-year-old university student, was arrested while in hiding during a security operation in Baniyas that started on 7 May.

The Syrian authorities have not said where he is being held. One of his brothers who is living outside Syria told Amnesty International that the family learned from some former detainees, who were also arrested during the security operation in Baniyas and later released, that Anas al-Shogre was being held in solitary confinement at the Military Security branch in the city of Tartus, south of Baniyas. The former detainees alleged that he was later transferred to the State Security branch in Damascus. They also informed Anas al-Shogre's family that while in the Military Security branch they heard him scream "I don't want to live, let me die", raising fears he was being tortured or otherwise ill-treated. His family visited that branch and asked for him on a number of occasions. Military Security personnel confirmed that he was being held at a security branch, but said they had no right to ask about him while he was held in such an establishment and refused to provide further details.

The Syrian authorities have not revealed the reasons for Anas al-Shogre's arrest, but Addounia, a private TV channel perceived to be close to the authorities, reportedly announced that the purpose of the security operation in Baniyas was to arrest the "terrorist" Anas al-Shogre who leads an "armed group". His family and local human rights activists believe, however, that Anas al-Shogre's arrest is related to his involvement in calling for and leading protests in the city of Baniyas and for reporting to the media, including BBC Arabic, on human rights violations that were committed by the Syrian authorities in that city. Amnesty International believes that Anas al-Shogre may be a prisoner of conscience detained for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

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

- Express concern that Anas al-Shogre has been held incommunicado since 14-15 May, and call for him to be fully protected against possible torture or other ill-treatment;
- Express concern that Anas al-Shogre is being held for calling for and leading protests in Baniyas and note that, if this is the case, Amnesty International would consider him a prisoner of conscience detained solely for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression and assembly and call for his immediate and unconditional release;
- Urge the Syrian authorities to take immediate steps to disclose the whereabouts of all detainees held in connection with ongoing protests, including Anas al-Shogre, and to give them immediate access to lawyers of their choosing and their families and any medical treatment they need, and to safeguard them from torture and other ill-treatment.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 16 AUGUST 2011 TO:**

#### **President**

Bashar al-Assad  
 Presidential Palace  
 al-Rashid Street  
 Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic  
**Fax: 011 963 11 332 3410**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

#### **Minister of Foreign Affairs**

Walid al-Mu'allim  
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
 al-Rashid Street  
 Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic  
**Fax: 011 963 11 214 6251**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

### **Also send copies to:**

Ambassador Dr Imad Moustapha, Embassy of the Syrian Arab Republic  
 2215 Wyoming Ave. NW Washington DC 20008  
**Fax: 1 202 234 9548 / 1 202 265 4585 / 1 202 232 4357 | Email: [info@syrembassy.net](mailto:info@syrembassy.net)**

Check with the AIUSA Section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mass protests calling for political reform and the overthrow of the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad started in Baniyas after midday prayers on Friday 18 March, when Anas al-Shogre reportedly gave a speech to worshippers calling on them to take to the streets to demand their freedom. He reportedly pledged: "I'm marching for freedom even if I had to do it on my own."

According to reports from Syrian human rights activists and the Local Coordination Committees in Syria (LCC), a network of local committees responsible for planning and organizing protests, Anas al-Shogre played a major role in organizing protests in his city and reporting on what was happening on the ground to the media. Below are links to two phone interviews he gave to BBC Arabic and Al Hiwar TV, a London-based Arabic-language channel:

BBC: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R\\_Bmi5Fu6EA&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_Bmi5Fu6EA&feature=player_embedded)

Al Hiwar: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vuJHhVLIXws&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vuJHhVLIXws&feature=player_embedded)

According to Anas al-Shogre's brother, soon after the start of the protests in Baniyas, Anas al-Shogre was summoned by the Military Security branch in Tartus and was asked to stop his activities. The brother also told Amnesty International that an officer from the Republican Guard telephoned Anas al-Shogre and offered him financial rewards if he publicly retracted his calls for protest, to which Anas al-Shogre responded, saying: "I have no personal demands; my demands are for the freedom of my country."

On 17 April, during an earlier security operation in Baniyas, Anas al-Shogre responded in a video posted on the internet to an accusation previously made on Syrian media that he was a "terrorist", saying, "We are not armed. Our weapon is our verbal demand for freedom; our weapon is our thought, pen and camera." See [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCer6fnz-Kc&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCer6fnz-Kc&feature=player_embedded)

On 11 May, during the security operation in Baniyas that started on 7 May, but after the withdrawal of army tanks from the city, Addounia TV broadcasted "confessions" by individuals it described as members of a "terrorist group" who claimed that Anas al-Shogre, among others, was inciting people to carry arms and that he "was co-operating with certain TV channels to provide them with news even if they were just rumours and that he trained a number of illiterate people to act as witnesses." See [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vborP7bQZak&has\\_verified=1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vborP7bQZak&has_verified=1)

Anas al-Shogre's brother and some Syrian human rights activists have told Amnesty International, however, that they believe these accusations against Anas al-Shogre are untrue, on the basis of what they know about his activities and what they perceive to be the lack of credibility of those who made them.

Name: Anas al-Shogre  
Gender m/f: M

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