

# URGENT ACTION

## DETAINEE FACES SECRET MILITARY TRIAL IN SYRIA

**Bassel Khartabil has been detained incommunicado since his arrest on 15 March. He is believed to have been referred to a Military Field Court, which does not allow for the right to defense or for appeals to verdicts and whose proceedings are conducted in secret.**

Bassel Khartabil, a Palestinian born and raised in Syria, was arrested in Damascus on 15 March for unknown reasons. Security officials at the Military Intelligence branch in Kafr Sousseh confirmed his detention to his family without providing any additional information about him, including where he was being held. A few weeks after his arrest, a released detainee who claims to have been held at the same Military Intelligence branch in Kafr Sousseh told Bassel Khartabil's family that he saw him there and that he had been tortured or otherwise ill-treated.

An overseas-based relative has reported that approximately two months ago, Bassel Khartabil was moved to 'Adra prison, north-east of Damascus. Although he remained in incommunicado detention, he communicated with other inmates who were allowed visitors and through them informed his family that he would be brought before a Military Field Court. Such courts are composed of military judges and defendants have no right to legal representation or to bring witnesses. The proceedings are conducted in secret and the dates of the sessions are not divulged. Verdicts handed down by the court are not subject to appeal.

According to the same relative, Bassil Khartabil was moved about two weeks ago to a Military Intelligence branch in the Damascus suburb of Qaboun and his health is suffering as a result of the detention conditions. The relative believes that this move could be linked to Bassel Khartabil's trial before the Military Field Court.

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

- Urging the Syrian authorities to reveal the whereabouts of Bassel Khartabil and ensure that he is protected from torture or other ill-treatment, is given immediate access to his family and lawyer and any medical care he may require;
- Asking for clarification of Bassil Khartabil's legal status, and calling on the authorities to release him if he is not to be charged with an internationally recognizable criminal offense, and tried according to international fair trial standards.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 29 JANUARY 2013 TO:**

**President**

Bashar al-Assad

**Fax: 011 963 11 332 3410 (keep trying)**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**Minister of Defense**

'Imad al-Fraj

**Fax: 011 963 11 223 7842 (keep trying)**

**011 963 11 666 2460 (keep trying)**

**(fax/phone line – say "Fax")**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**Minister of Foreign Affairs**

Walid al-Mu'allim

**Fax: 011 963 11 214 6253 (keep trying)**

**(fax/phone line – say "Fax"**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

### **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](mailto:info@syrembassy.net) -OR- [consular@syrembassy.net](mailto: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

Thousands of suspected opponents of the government have been arrested in Syria since pro-reform protests broke out 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 first broke out, the situation has evolved into an internal armed conflict throughout much of the country. Systematic and widespread human rights abuses, including crimes against humanity and possible 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.

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.

In light of this, Amnesty International is 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 and/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](http://www.eyesonsyria.org)) to see where human rights violations are being committed in Syria, and Amnesty International's global activism to seek justice.**

**Name:** Bassel Khartabil (m)

**Issues:** Arbitrary arrest, Fear for safety, Health concern

**Further information on UA:** 264/12 (18 September 2012)

**Issue Date:** 18 December 2012

**Country:** Syria