

URGENT ACTION

RED CRESCENT VOLUNTEER HELD INCOMMUNICADO

Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteer Mohammad Atfah was arrested at a checkpoint in Homs, Syria on 3 February 2013. He has since been detained incommunicado in conditions which possibly amount to enforced disappearance and may be held at the Military Intelligence branch in Homs. He may have been tortured or otherwise ill-treated.



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Mohammad Atfah, aged 20, has been volunteering with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, part of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, for the past two years. According to a local contact, he was on his way home with a friend when they were stopped at a government-operated check point in the Insha'at neighbourhood of Homs at around 9pm by persons believed to be members of the Military Intelligence. It is unclear where he was taken after the arrest as, according to a local contact, his family has not received any information concerning Mohammad Atfah's arrest and subsequent detention. Another contact claims that former detainees at the Military Intelligence branch in Homs who were released in late February said that they saw Mohammad Atfah there with bruises on his face and body as well as other wounds. He was apparently also unable to focus and was unresponsive when spoken to.

The reasons for Mohammad Atfah's arrest are unclear. As far as Amnesty International's contacts are aware, he was not a political activist. Thousands have been arrested by government forces since widespread unrest broke out in Syria over two years ago, which has since developed into an internal armed conflict in much of the country.

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

- ✓ Urging the Syrian authorities to reveal Mohammad Atfah's whereabouts and fate, grant him immediate access to his family and lawyer, ensure that he is protected from torture or other ill-treatment, and give him all necessary medical care;
- ✓ Asking for clarification of Mohammad Atfah's legal status, and calling on the authorities to release him if he is not to be charged with an internationally recognizable criminal offence, and tried according to international fair trial standards;
- ✓ Calling on the Syrian authorities to promptly set up an independent and impartial investigation into allegations that Mohammad Atfah was subjected to torture or other ill-treatment. Anyone found responsible for abuses should be brought to justice in accordance with international fair trial standards.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 27 MAY 2013 TO:

President

Bashar al-Assad

Fax: +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 Defence

'Imad al-Fraji

Fax: +963 11 223 7842 (keep trying)

+963 11 666 2460 (keep trying)

(fax/phone line – say "Fax")

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Walid al-Mu'allim

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

al-Rashid Street

Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

Fax: +963 11 214 6253 (keep trying)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Where appropriate, please also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please also send copies to the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations:

His Excellency Bashar Ja'afari, Ph.D., Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, 820 Second Avenue, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10017,

Fax: +1212 983 4439; E-mail: exesec.syria@gmail.com

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mohammad Atfah works in a restaurant in his home city of Homs, Syria, which has seen heavy fighting between Syrian government forces, pro-government *shabiha* militias and armed opposition groups in the ongoing internal armed conflict. Government forces have indiscriminately killed or targeted civilians during air or artillery strikes, carried out extrajudicial executions and arrested thousands of individuals, many of whom have been subjected to torture or other ill-treatment.

Amnesty International has previously documented human rights abuses by state or pro-government forces against injured people and health workers. Many of the victims had treated wounded individuals without informing the authorities about them to protect their patients from arrest and possible torture. For more information, please see Amnesty International's report *Health crisis: Syrian government targets the wounded and health workers*, October 2011 (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/059/2011/en>).

For an insight into the widespread torture and other ill-treatment in Syria's detention centres, please see *I wanted to die: Syria's torture survivors speak out*, March 2012 (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/016/2012/en>).

Amnesty International has received the names of over 1,000 individuals believed to have died in the custody of the Syrian security forces since the beginning of the unrest – nearly 500 of them in 2012 alone. Amnesty International documented this practice in August 2011: *Deadly detention: Deaths in custody amid popular protest in Syria* (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/035/2011/en>).

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 members of the security forces 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. See *Syria: Summary killings and other abuses by armed opposition groups* (MDE 24/008/2013), 14 March 2013. <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE24/008/2013/en/8d527c4e-2aff-4311-bad8-d63dbc97c96a/mde240082013en.html>.

Name: Mohammad Atfah
Gender m/f: male

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