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Middle East/North Africa - Syria

Sham mission?

Arab League observers must visit jailed bloggers and journalists, demand their release

30 December 2011

As the Arab League observer mission continues in Syria, Reporters Without Borders is relieved to [learn](#) that **Jehad Jamal**, a blogger also known as "Milan" who was last arrested on 14 October, was finally released yesterday evening.

It was his third period in detention since the start of the mass uprising in March. The first time he was arrested, in the northern city of Aleppo on 5 May, he was held for a month. The second time he was arrested, on 8 August, he was held for two months.

Jamal's latest release must not distract from the fact that many other bloggers and journalists are still held. We call on the Arab League observers to visit them and demand their release, along with the release of all the detainees in Syria. It is also important for the observers to interview those who have been freed after months in detention or else this mission will be just a sham.

Here is non-exhaustive list of journalists and bloggers currently detained:

- **Reem Ghazzi**, an actress, director and journalist who was arrested on 26 November and was transferred to Adraa prison at the start of December.
- **Qais Abatili**, a very active netizen who was arrested on 25 September (<https://www.facebook.com/qaisabazli...>).
- **Nizar Al-Baba**, an online activist who has been held since 21 September.
- **Nizar Adleh**, a journalist who contributes to many websites. He has been held since 6 September.
- **Miraal Brouda**, a writer and poet who contributes to many websites.
- **Ahmed Bilal**, a producer for [Al-Naba](#) who was arrested in the Damascus suburb of Mo'adamieh on 13 September.
- **Amer Matar**, a journalist with the daily [Al-Naba](#) who was arrested on 4 September. This was his second arrest.
- **Alwan Zouaiter**, a journalist who was written for many Lebanese dailies. He was arrested by intelligence officials in the northern city of Raqqah after returning from Libya. He was initially sentenced to five years in prison for allegedly contacting the Syrian opposition while abroad. The sentence was subsequently reduced to 13 months.
- **Omar Abdel Salam**
- **Abd Qabani**, a netizen arrested on 8 August.
- **Ammar Sa'ib**, a netizen arrested on 1 August in Damascus.
- **Abd Al-Majid Tamer**, a freelance journalist working for Kurdish news websites who was arrested on 31 May.
- **Manaf Al Zeitoun**, who was arrested on 25 March. There has been no news of him since his arrest.

The following two persons are also still detained:

- **Moheeb Al-Nawathy**, Palestinian journalist who disappeared in Syria in January 2011. His family has had no word from him since 5 January, nine days after he arrived in Damascus to do research for a book he is writing about Hamas.

He was due to have returned on 9 January to Norway, where he has resided as a political refugee since 2007. His family reported his disappearance to the Norwegian police on 11 January. Reporters Without Borders calls on the Syrian authorities to do everything possible to locate him.

Al-Nawathy is a Fatah supporter who used to live in Gaza and work for the website of the Dubai-based satellite TV station . His first book, published in 2002, was entitled " Hamas from the inside." His wife reported his disappearance to the Palestinian embassy in Oslo as well as to the Norwegian authorities, while his Gaza-based relatives and the Union of Palestinian Journalists have issued a joint appeal for information as to his whereabouts.

- **Tal Al-Mallouhi**, a 19-year-old student and blogger who has been detained since December 2009, was brought before a state security court in Damascus for the second time on 17 January of this year. Her first appearance before the court was on 19 November 2010, after she had been [held incommunicado](#) for nearly 11 months.

Mallouhi, who wrote about the Palestinian cause in her blog, is reportedly accused of spying for the United States. She is being held in solitary confinement in Duma prison, near Damascus. Internet users all over the world have been calling for her release (<http://freetal.com/>). She reportedly began a hunger strike on 26 December.

Reporters Without Borders has learned that the following persons have also been released:

- **Mohamed Jamal Tahan**, a member of the League of Arab Writers and Union of Journalists, who was arrested on 20 July after signing the "Aleppo Appeal for the Nation." He was released on 24 December.
 - **Nidal Hassan**, a filmmaker who was arrested on 3 November. He was released on 22 December.
 - **Mohamed Dahnoun**, a journalist from Idlib who writes for the youth section of the Lebanese newspaper . Arrested on 20 December in the Damascus neighbourhood of Al-Midan, he was released two days later.
 - **Guevara Nemer**, a photographer and filmmaker who was arrested at Damascus airport on 8 December as she was about to fly to the United Arab Emirates to attend the Dubai film festival. She was released on 16 December. She was previously arrested in July.
 - **Ammar Musare**, a journalist who used to be 's Damascus correspondent. He was arrested on 14 December at Damascus international airport as he was about to fly to Saudi Arabia to see his daughter. He has since been released.
 - **Manal Janabi**, an activist who was arrested on 29 October. She was released on 29 December.
 - **Mahmoud Asem Al-Mohamed**, a freelance journalist working for Kurdish news websites who was arrested on 31 May.
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