

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/preventive-arrests-and-german-26-07-2011,40696.html>

Middle East & North Africa - Syria

Persecution of dissidents

## Preventive arrests and "German chair" for detainees in Syria

26 July 2011

### Syria

The repression is not letting up after four months of protests. Reporters Without Borders has registered more than 70 abuses against media personnel since the wave of anti-government demonstrations began in March.

"This figure is indicative of a government determination to control the media and the danger involved in working as a journalists or simply reporting an item of news," the press freedom organization said.

Reporters Without Borders condemns writer and journalist **Mohamed Tahan Jamal's** arrest in the northern city of Aleppo on 20 July during a wave of preventive arrests by the security forces. A member of the League of Arab Writers and Union of Journalists and contributor to the pro-government daily Tishreen, he is one of 28 Aleppo intellectuals to sign the "Aleppo Appeal for the Nation," a call for political reforms and a peaceful transition that was submitted to the city's governor and posted on Facebook.

Reporters Without Borders has learned that the photographer **Khaldun Al-Batal** was arrested while covering a peaceful sit-in on 20 July in the old town of Damascus.

With UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon's special adviser for the prevention of genocide, Francis Deng, talking of possible [crimes against humanity](#) and the Local Committee for Coordination in Syria referring to [several cases of torture](#), Reporters Without Borders is concerned about the treatment that detained journalists and bloggers are receiving.

Saber Darwish, a journalist who was arrested on 15 March and was released nine days later, has said he was subjected to electric shocks while detained, and was stretched on a metal frame called the "[German chair](#)".

At least 6 journalists and bloggers are known to be currently detained in Syria. They include:

- **Abd Al-Majid Tamer** and **Mahmoud Asem Al-Mohamed**, two journalists working for Kurdish websites, who were arrested on 31 May.
- **Omar Koush**, who was arrested at Damascus international airport on 1 May as he returned from a conference in Turkey.
- **Anas Al-Ma'arawi**, a journalist and blogger and founder of the first Arab website specializing in the Android system, who was arrested in a Damascus suburb on 1 July.
- **Manaf Al- Zeitoun**, who was arrested on 25 March. There has been no news of him since his arrest.
- **Mohamed Nijati Tayara**, a writer and member of the Human Rights League, who was arrested at a security checkpoint on 12 March and was initially accused of disseminating false information. A Homs criminal court dropped the charges after the second [amnesty of 21 June](#). His case was then transferred to a Damascus appeal court which has yet to take a decision. His health deteriorated after he began a hunger strike with other detainees in protest against their detention and he has not had access to appropriate treatment. He is allowed to see his wife and lawyer once a week but no one else.

The press freedom organization has learned that **Abd Al-Hamid Toufik** resigned as *Al-Jazeera* bureau chief in Damascus after the station was forced to suspend its activities in Syria, and **Zeina Yazji** resigned as an *Al-Arabiya* presenter on 11 May following pressure from government supporters.

## Jordan

Chanting "*Political reforms do not need oppression of journalists*," 300 people demonstrated in Amman on 22 July in protest against [police violence against nine journalists](#) during a demonstration in the capital on 15 July.

Tarek Momani, the head of the Jordanian journalists' union, said he has filed a complaint against the police. Four police officers have been arrested since the incident and an investigation is under way. Speaking on 22 July, King Abdallah condemned the violence against journalists as unwarranted and promising that measures would be taken very soon to assure the protection of journalists.

## Bahrain

During a news conference at Manama's Ramada Hotel on 14 July, the journalist **Reem Khalifa** was violently attacked by government supporters, who accused her of using violence. Like many other journalists, Khalifa is constantly harassed by the regime's supporters and often gets telephone death threats.

She has been a target ever since a news conference by foreign minister Khalid bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa on 17 February at which she expressed outrage at the government's violent crackdown on the initial demonstrations and talked of a "[massacre](#)." The secretary-general of the Gulf Cooperation Council attended the news conference.

## Egypt

Reporters Without Borders regrets that **Dina Abd-Al Rahman** was fired as a presenter of the *Dream TV* programme *Sabah Dream* yesterday following an altercation on the air with a former air force officer, Abd Al-Monem Kato.

Many online commentators and activists have expressed their outrage about her dismissal, describing *Dream TV* owner Ahmed Bahgat, an ally of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces as a businessman opposed to media freedom on his own TV channel. While there is no evidence that the council had a role in her dismissal, the military has taken [direct action against journalists](#) on many occasions in recent months.

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