

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/syrie-arrest-of-noted-blogger-shows-no-05-12-2011,41512.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Syria

Blogger bailed

Detained Syrian blogger Razan Ghazzawi released on bail

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Reporters Without Borders notes that the blogger **Razan Ghazzawi** was released on bail of 15 000 Syrian pounds (\$300) yesterday, two weeks after she was arrested.

"We welcome the release of Razan Ghazzawi but we call on the Syrian government to drop the charges against her. The authorities must also release as soon as possible all journalists, bloggers and dissidents jailed for expressing themselves freely", the press freedom organization said.

Ghazzawi was charged with "broadcasting false information that could undermine national morale", "circulating false news that could weaken national sentiment and ignite sectarian strife" and "establishing an organization that aims to change the social and economic entity of the state".

The charges could incur a sentence of between three and 15 years in prison if she is found guilty. No date has been set for her next trial hearing.

Detained woman blogger facing possible jail sentence 2011.12.13

Reporters Without Borders is very concerned about the fate of the Syrian-American blogger **Razan Ghazzawi**, who was brought before a court today following her arrest on 4 December as she was about to cross the border into Jordan.

Her lawyer said she was facing between three and 15 years in prison on a total of three charges. One was "establishing an organization that aims to change the social and economic entity of the state." Another was "circulating false news that could weaken national sentiment and ignite sectarian strife." It relates to her alleged membership of a committee that organizes pro-democracy demonstrations.

The third was violating article 335 of the criminal code, which bans "participation in a riotous demonstration." When arrested at the border, she was on her way to attend a forum in Amman on the defence of media freedom.

Reporters Without Borders calls on the authorities to release her unconditionally and drop all the charges against her. The regime must also end its severe harassment of bloggers and journalists. Some of those who were arrested have since been released, but many continue to be held on serious charges.

A [Facebook group](#) and an [online petition](#) have been launched in support of Ghazzawi. Internet users can also express their solidarity with her by using the [#FreeRazan](#) hashtag on Twitter.

Arrest of noted blogger shows no end to crackdown despite recent releases 2011.12.05

Reports Without Borders strongly condemns the arrest yesterday of the blogger **Razan Ghazzawi** at the Syria-Jordan border while she was on her way to Amman.

Since 2009, Ghazzawi has been running the blog [Razaniyat](#), where she campaigns for freedom of expression and gay rights. She also coordinates the Syrian Centre for the Media and Freedom of Expression, which she was to have represented at a workshop in the Jordanian capital on freedom of information in the Arab world.

According to several media outlets, Ghazzawi was believed to have been the inspiration for the [hoax blog A Gay Girl in Damascus](#).

[Her last post](#), on 1 December, was about the release of the blogger **Hossein Ghoureir**, who had been abducted on 24 October by Syrian security forces.

Two days ago, media workers and figures from the world of the arts and culture appeared before the courts: film-maker **Nidal Hassan**, film-maker and journalist **Reem Ghazzi**, blogger **Jehad Jamal**, better known under the blog name "Milan", activist **Manal Janabi** and **Mohamed Fawzi Karam**.

In addition, Reporters Without Borders has learned of the release of five journalists and bloggers on 30 November: bloggers **Rudy Osman** and **Assem Hamchou** who were arrested in August, **Hanadi Zahlout**, who was arrested on 4 August for the third time, freelance journalist **Omar al As'ad** and blogger **Malak Al-Shanawani**.

They were freed a few days before the Muslim festival of Eid al-Adha as part of a mass release of more than 900 detainees including activists and government opponents.

(http://www.bbc.co.uk/arabic/middleeast/2011/11/111130_turkey_conference.shtml). The blogger **Hossein Ghoureir** was released on 1 December.

Rumours about the death of the journalist **Mohamed Jamal Tahan**, former editor of *Al-Adiyat* magazine, have spread on the Internet. He is reported to have been suffering from advanced cancer and, according to some reports, he had died in detention from complications arising from his illness.

However, this was denied in posts on a Facebook page in support of the journalist. There has been no news of him since he was arrested at his home in Aleppo in September by air force intelligence agents, despite his illness.

Mohamed Amin, a journalist with the privately-owned pro-government daily *Al-Watan*, announced his resignation yesterday in Cairo, saying he was no longer able to work for a newspaper that "reprints official speeches".

Al Watan has been hit by new sanctions by the European Union three days ago aimed at several institutions and public figures in Syria for their alleged role in the crackdown on dissent.

In parallel, President Bashar al-Assad issued a decree two days ago setting up a National Information Council to regulate radio, television and the Internet.

The creation of this body at a time when several journalists and bloggers are deprived of their freedom underscores the macabre and schizophrenic attitude of the Syrian authorities towards those engaged in informing the public, in a country where the pursuit of journalism can be fatal.

Here is a partial list of journalists and bloggers in detention:

Qais Abatili, a very active netizen who was arrested on 25 September.

Nizar Al-Baba, an online activist who has been held since 21 September.

Jehad Jamal, a blogger better known by the blog name "Milan," who was arrested on 8 August and then again on 14 October.

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 *Falesteen TV* who was arrested in the Damascus suburb of Mo'adamieh on 13 September.

Amer Matar, a journalist with the daily *Al-Hayat* 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.

Mohamed Tahan Jamal, 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."

Abd Al-Majid Tamer and **Mahmoud Asem Al-Mohamed**, two journalists working for Kurdish news websites who were arrested on 31 May.

Manaf Al Zeitoun, who was arrested on 25 March. There has been no news of him since his arrest.

Sami Al-Halabi, who according to some sources, was released on 17 August. Zouheir Al-Mihsan, who writes for the daily *Al-Kassian*. He was reportedly arrested on 16 March. He may have been released on 6 October.

Reporters Without Borders published a report on 1 December, entitled "[Upheaval in the Arab world: Media as key witnesses and political pawns](#)" which analyses the methods used by the authorities to prevent the flow of information in six countries where there have been popular uprisings, from 17 December 2010 to mid-November this year. It includes a section on Syria.

The press freedom organization demands that the Syrian authorities release all journalists and bloggers who have committed no crime other than informing the public.
