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<http://www.rsf.org/syria-writer-and-activist-dies-in-prison-10-02-2012,41845.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Syria

End the rumours

Authorities urged to respond to rumours of writer's death in detention

13 February 2012

Reporters Without Borders urges the Syrian authorities to shed light on the status of detained writer and opposition activist **Hussein Issou** and not leave his family in an unbearable state of uncertainty. According to rumours circulating since 10 February, he died in detention and his body was taken to the morgue of the military hospital in Damascus. A war of information or disinformation about his fate has raged for the past three days.

Issou was arrested on 3 September in the northeastern city of Al-Hassakah and, according to the information obtained by Reporters Without Borders, was admitted on 14 January to the military hospital in the Damascus suburb of Mezzeh, where he spent three days isolated from other patients and permanently guarded by two soldiers.

A relative told Reporters Without Borders his name no longer appears in the official hospital register. Because of disk problems, Issou was paralyzed on one side of his body and was no longer able to stand up or walk unaided, the relative said.

In a 14 January press release, Reporters Without Borders [already voiced](#) alarm about Issou's state of health because of his heart problems, and the organization now fears the worst.

A total of five journalists have died in Syria in connection with their work since July. The most recent was [Gilles Jacquier](#), a French TV reporter working for France 2, who was killed in Homs on 11 January after entering the country with the government's permission. Syrian journalist [Shoukri Ahmed Ratib Abu Bourghoul](#) died in hospital on 2 January from a gunshot wound to the head that he had received three days earlier.

Citizen journalist [Basil Al-Sayed](#), 24, was shot in the head by a member of the security forces while filming a bloodbath in the Homs district of Bab Amr on 29 December, and died while being taken to hospital. Photographer and video-reporter **Ferzat Jarban** was murdered on 20 November after being arrested the previous day in Homs. And finally, **Soleiman Saleh Abazaïd**, who ran the "Liberated people of Horan" *Facebook* page, was killed by a shot to the head on 22 July.

Reporters Without Borders has also learned that [Mazhar Tayyara](#), a citizen journalist known as "**Omar the Syrian**," was killed by shrapnel from a shell while helping to rescue wounded people during a major bombardment in Homs on the night of 3 February. He had been working for Agence France-Presse for the past two months.

Meanwhile, there is no news of a number of journalists and netizens who have been in detention for some time. Here is a partial list of such detainees:

- **Said Dairky**, an engineer employed by the national TV station who was arrested on 14 January.
- **Alaa Shueiti**, a cyber-activist arrested on 15 October in Homs.
- **Firas Fayyad**, a filmmaker who was arrested on 1 December at Damascus airport as he was about to fly to Dubai.
- **Bilal Ahmed Bilal**, a Palestinian TV producer who was arrested in the Damascus suburb of Mo'adamieh on 13 September.

- **Abdelmajid Rashed Al-Rahmoun**, who was arrested on 23 August in Hama.
- **Tarek Said Balsha**, a photographer arrested in Latakia on 19 August. There has been no news of him since then.
- **Mohamed Nihad Kurdiyya**, a mechanical engineer who was arrested in Latakia on 18 August as he was about to be interviewed by *Al-Jazeera*.
- **Abdelwalid Kharsah**, a reporter who was arrested while covering demonstrations in Deraa on 17 August.
- **Olwan Zouaiter**, a journalist who has written for many Lebanese dailies. He was arrested by intelligence officials in the northern city of Raqqah on 16 March 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. He is serving it in Raqqah prison.

The following two persons are also still detained:

► **Moheeb Al-Nawathy**, a Palestinian journalist who had lived in Norway since 2007. He went missing on 5 January 2011, nine days after arriving in Damascus. He is a Fatah member and used to work for the website of the satellite TV station Al-Arabiya.

► **Tal Al-Mallouhi**, a 19-year-old student and blogger who has been detained since December 2009. She was brought before a state security court in Damascus for the second time on 17 January 2011. Reportedly accused of spying for the United States, she is being held in Duma prison, near Damascus. Internet users all over the world have been calling for her release.
