

URGENT ACTION

SYRIAN KURDS INCOMMUNICADO, RISK TORTURE

Four Syrian Kurdish men are being held at an unknown location without contact with the outside world. They have been in detention since September and October 2008 and are at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

'**Abdelbaqi Khalaf** was arrested by State Security officers on 11 September 2008, in front of his clothing store in the north-eastern town of Qamishli. **Munther Ahmed** and his brothers **Nedal Ahmed** and **Riad Ahmed** were arrested by State Security officers at their homes in Qamishli on 3 September, 11 September and 8 October respectively.

The authorities have not disclosed information regarding where the four men are being held, why they have been arrested or whether they will be charged.

The four men were among dozens of Syrian Kurds arrested between September and December 2008, mostly in Qamishli, but also in the towns of 'Amuda, Deir Baiseya and 'Efrin. According to Syrian human rights NGOs, almost all have been held incommunicado in unknown locations since their arrest.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Arabic, French, English or your own language:

- √ Expressing concern that the four men (naming them) have been held incommunicado since September and October 2008 and are at risk of torture and other ill-treatment;
- √ urging the authorities to release the four men immediately and unconditionally, unless they are to be charged with recognizable criminal offences and tried promptly in proceedings which meet fair trial standards;
- √ calling on the authorities to immediately allow the four men visits from their families, access to lawyers of their choosing and any medical attention they may require;
- √ reminding them that Syria is a state party to the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which bans torture and other ill-treatment under any circumstances.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 6 OCTOBER 2009 TO:

President

His Excellency Bashar al-Assad
 Presidential Palace
 al-Rashid Street
 Damascus
 Syrian Arab Republic
Fax: +963 11 332 3410
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Defence

His Excellency Lieutenant-General Ali
 Ben-Mohammed Habib Mahmoud
 Ministry of Defence
 Omayyad Square
 Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Fax: +963 11 223 7842
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Minister of Interior

His Excellency Major Sa'id Mohamed
 Samour
 Ministry of Interior
 'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar Street
 Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Fax: +963 11 222 3428
Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
 INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

SYRIAN KURDS INCOMMUNICADO, RISK TORTURE

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

'Abdelbaqi Khalaf is an advocate of democracy in Syria and political unity within the Kurdish community who is known to have frequent contact with members of different Kurdish political parties. He told friends before his arrest that he believed State Security agents were monitoring his movements..According to sources in Syria, 'Abdelbaqi Khalaf was arrested once before by State Security officers, in May 2008, when he was detained and interrogated for several hours before being released without charge.

Before their arrest, Nedal and Riad Ahmed were engaged in discussions with other Kurdish activists to set up a Kurdish cultural organization to promote Kurdish culture through books, magazines and cultural events. Since 1992 they had been operating an unofficial library which lent out books on Kurdish issues in both Arabic and Kurdish and, in a limited number of cases, printed books which authors writing on Kurdish matters were unable to publish elsewhere.

Kurds in Syria suffer discrimination because of their ethnicity; many of them are denied Syrian nationality and therefore do not receive the same education, employment, health care and other rights enjoyed by Syrian nationals. In addition, severe restrictions are placed on the use of the Kurdish language and culture in Syria; publishing and printing materials in Kurdish, as well as teaching it, is forbidden and penalized by imprisonment. Kurdish civil society activists and those deemed to be associated with Kurdish political parties or groups who raise concerns about the treatment of Kurds in Syria, face the risk of arbitrary arrest, torture and imprisonment after unfair trials.

UA: 222/09 Index: MDE 24/022/2009 Issue Date: 25 August 2009

