

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/syria-journalists-detained-as-threats-to-14-04-2011,40030.html>

Middle East & North Africa - Syria

Crackdown

Authorities arrest freelance journalist reporting for France Culture who occasionally works for Le Monde

14 April 2011

Eleven journalists detained as threats to media increase

Reporters Without Borders today called on the Syrian government to free nearly a dozen journalists and netizens it has imprisoned as it battles protests against the regime of President Bashar al-Assad.

"The terror and arbitrary rule must end," the media freedom organisation said, "and all those held, as well as prisoners of conscience, must be released."

Among journalists and netizens arrested are Algerian freelance reporter **Khaled Sid Mohand**, who was making documentaries for the French broadcaster *France Culture's* "Sur les docks" programme and who also works for the French daily *Le Monde*. He was picked up on 9 April and is thought to be in a Damascus prison.

Syrian journalist and writer **Fayez Sara** was arrested on 11 April in the capital after attending a meeting of the opposition Damascus Declaration National Council. He was earlier arrested in 2008 and imprisoned for two and a half years for signing the Declaration, which calls for lifting the state of emergency, allowing freedom of expression and assembly and the departure of the ruling Assad family.

Threats and attacks on journalists have increased during the current unrest and foreign journalists, including those working for the *Associated Press* and *Reuters* news agencies, have been deported. Many Syrian journalists and bloggers have also been arrested. The regime is preventing foreign and local journalists from covering demonstrations and some have been physically attacked. Entry visas for foreign journalists are hard to get.

Syrians and foreigners living in the country are afraid to speak up and the authorities have imposed a media blackout on the protests and on the brutality of police and troops against demonstrators.

Those being held include **Wassim Hassan**, blogger (since today), **Mohamed Zaid Mistou**, Syrian-born Norwegian correspondent for the news website *Al-Arabiya.net* (since 7 April), **Akram Abu Safi** and **Sobhie Naeem Al-Assal** (since 24 March), **Amer Matar**, of *Al-Hayat* (1 April), journalist **Zaher Omareen** (27 March), journalist and writer **Mohamed Dibo** (19 March), blogger **Ahmed Hadifa** (24 March) and Kurdish blogger **Kamal Hussein Sheikou** (held since 16 March).
