

URGENT ACTION

SYRIAN MEDICAL VOLUNTEER HELD INCOMMUNICADO

Syrian student Suhaib Hassan Swaidan was arrested on 23 May while volunteering with a Syrian Arab Red Crescent ambulance crew. He has since been detained incommunicado. His brother, Abdullah Hassan Swaidan, was arrested on 9 May and has also been held in incommunicado detention since his arrest. The current location of both men is unknown.

According to local contacts 21-year-old economics student, **Suhaib Swaidan**, was arrested in his hometown of Homs, western Syria, when the ambulance he was working on was stopped at a Syrian army check-point. Contacts told Amnesty International that no reasons for Suhaib Swaidan's arrest were given and no paperwork was produced by the soldiers conducting the arrest.

A released detainee later said that he saw Suhaib Swaidan in detention at the Military Intelligence branch in Homs and he said he appeared psychologically unwell. Apparently Suhaib Swaidan had been interrogated about weapons smuggling in an ambulance. Local contacts informed Amnesty International that a relative of Suhaib Swaidan visited the branch and was told that both he and his brother, **Abdullah Swaidan**, who went missing on his way to Damascus on 9 May, were held on accusations related to protesting and the destruction of traffic lights. The relative was not allowed to speak to or contact either of the brothers.

Amnesty International was told that the family has not heard from either man since and it is not clear where they are currently held. Local contacts believe that the reported charges against the two men are not credible, and they are unaware that either of the brothers have attended any demonstrations in the past and are not believed to have destroyed any traffic lights.

Please write immediately in Arabic, English or your own language:

- Urging the Syrian authorities to reveal the whereabouts of the two men, grant them immediate access to their family, lawyer and any medical attention they may need;
- Urging the Syrian authorities to ensure that the two men are protected from torture or other ill-treatment;
- Asking for clarification of Suhaib and Abdullah Swaidan's legal status, and calling on the authorities to release them if they are not to be charged with an internationally recognizable criminal offence, and tried according to international fair trial standards.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 02 AUGUST 2013 TO:

President

Bashar al-Assad

Fax: +963 11 332 3410 (keep trying)

(fax/phone line – say "Fax") (Fax is the only reliable communication method;

please do not send letters)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Defence

'Imad al-Fraji

Fax: +963 11 223 7842 (keep trying)

+963 11 666 2460 (keep trying)

(fax/phone line – say "Fax")

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Walid al-Mu'allim

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

al-Rashid Street

Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

Fax: +963 11 214 6253 (keep trying)

Salutation: Your Excellence

Where appropriate, please also send copies to the Syrian and Russian diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please also send copies to the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations:

His Excellency Bashar Ja'afari, Ph.D., Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, 820 Second Avenue, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10017,

Fax: +1212 983 4439; E-mail: exesec.syria@gmail.com

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Suhaib Swaidan has been a volunteer with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, part of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, since 2011 as a leader of one of the first aid squads. He also works with the human resource committee of the Homs branch. He was previously injured while carrying out medical work, the first time in 2011 when he was injured in the neck by shrapnel from a shell dropped by Syrian government forces in Homs and again in early 2012 when a bullet penetrated his thigh during a first aid call.

His brother, 27-year-old Abdullah Swaidan, who is a fifth year architecture student, went missing on his way to Damascus, where he had intended to have his graduation thesis printed. Local contacts told Amnesty International that the circumstances of his arrest were unclear until a member of the family asked the bus company he had used about his fate and whereabouts. A staff member apparently informed them that he had been arrested at a check-point on his way to Damascus.

Amnesty International has previously documented human rights abuses by state or pro-government forces against injured people and health workers. Many of the victims had treated wounded individuals without informing the authorities about them to protect their patients from arrest and possible torture. For more information, please see Amnesty International's report Health crisis: Syrian government targets the wounded and health workers, Index number: MDE 24/059/2011, October 2011 (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/059/2011/en>).

For an insight into the widespread torture and other ill-treatment in Syria's detention centres, please see I wanted to die: Syria's torture survivors speak out, Index: MDE 24/016/2012, March 2012 (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/016/2012/en>).

Amnesty International has received the names of over 1,000 individuals believed to have died in the custody of the Syrian security forces since the beginning of the unrest – nearly 500 of them in 2012 alone. Amnesty International documented this practice in August 2011: Deadly detention: Deaths in custody amid popular protest in Syria, Index: MDE 24/035/2011, (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/035/2011/en>).

Although the vast majority of the human rights abuses documented by Amnesty International have been committed by the state's armed forces and pro-government shabiha militias, abuses have also been committed by armed opposition groups. This includes the torture and killing of captured members of the security forces and shabiha militia members as well as the abduction and killing of people known or suspected to support or work with the government and its forces, or the taking of civilians as hostages to try to negotiate prisoner swaps. Amnesty International condemns without reservation such abuses and has called on the leadership of all armed opposition groups in Syria to state publicly that such acts are prohibited and to do all in their power to ensure that opposition forces put an immediate stop to them. See Syria: Summary killings and other abuses by armed opposition groups (MDE 24/008/2013), 14 March 2013. <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE24/008/2013/en/8d527c4e-2aff-4311-bad8-d63dbc97c96a/mde240082013en.html>.

Name: Suhaib Hassan Swaidan and Abdullah Hassan Swaidan

Gender m/f: Both male

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