

URGENT ACTION

SYRIAN KURDISH ACTIVISTS ARBITRARILY DETAINED

Syrian Kurdish opposition activists Mohsen Taher, Amin Hussam and Bashar Amin have been arrested by the Asayish, the police force of the Democratic Union Party (PYD)-led Autonomous Administration, in the north-eastern region of Syria. The first two activists were detained on 9 May, and the third one on 21 May. All three men are currently held in poor conditions at Allaya prison in Qamishli, north-eastern Syria, without being charged.

Syrian Kurdish leading opposition activists **Mohsen Taher**, 49 years old, and **Amin Hussam**, 58 years old, were arrested by the Asayish forces on 9 May, in Qamishli city. According to close family members, the Asayish forces raided the Kurdish National Council in Syria (ENKS) office at 7:15 pm that night and arrested 13 leading members of the ENKS, including the two men. The next day, the majority were released with the exception of Mohsen Taher, the president of the local councils of the ENKS, Amin Hussam, member of the General Secretariat and Fasla Youssef, the vice president. On 31 May 2017, Fasla Youssef was released.

Bashar Amin, 70 years old, and a member of the ENKS and the political bureau of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Syria (KDPS), held a press conference on 20 May at the ENKS office during which he criticized the repressive practices of the Asayish against political activists. On that night at around midnight, the Asayish forces patrol raided Bashar Amin's house in Hasakeh and arrested him. One of the Asayish members told Bashar Amin's family that no arrest warrant had been issued, but an arrest "order" was in place. Bashar Amin's whereabouts were unknown for ten days despite the family's effort to locate him through touring detention centres and prisons in Hasakeh and Qamishli asking about him. On 1 June, the family received a phone call from the Asayish informing them that Bashar Amin is at Allaya prison, in Qamishli, north-eastern Syria.

On 5 June, Mohsen Taher, Amin Hussam and Bashar Amin's relatives were finally allowed to visit them in Allaya prison for the first time since their arrest. The relatives told Amnesty International that the three activists are currently being held in a small communal cell with other detainees. Bashar Amin's relative explained that he was first held in solitary confinement for the first four days before being transferred to the communal cell with the other activists. Mohsen Taher, Amin Hussam and Bashar Amin confirmed to their relatives that they haven't been formally charged with an offence and had not had access to lawyers.

The three men are held in poor detention conditions. Their relatives added that they are struggling to cope with the high temperatures inside the cell. This is due to the lack of proper ventilation system and insufficient food provision. These conditions are affecting the health of Mohsen Taher who suffers from chronic back pain, and Amin Hussam who suffers from chronic migraine and neuronal necrosis in his right leg, requiring continuous medication. Bashar Amin's health is also affected as he suffers a heart condition and requires proper medical care and nutrition.

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

- Urging the Asayish forces to release Mohsen Taher, Amin Hussam and Bashar Amin immediately or charge them with a recognizable offence, in line with international law and standards;
- Urging them to ensure that pending their release, they are protected from torture and other ill-treatment, granted access to their family and lawyers, and any medical treatment they may require.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 21 JULY 2017 TO:

Head of Asayish

Mr Ciwan Ibrahim

Email: asayisraghandin@gmail.com

Twitter: @ciwanbrahim

Salutation: Mr

Co-president of the Democratic Union

Party (PYD)

Mr Salih Maslem Mohamed

Twitter: @serokepyd

Salutation: Mr

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

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Bashar Amin was formerly arrested from his home by an unknown party in May 2014 and exiled to Iraqi Kurdistan where he stayed for two weeks. He then returned to Hasakeh to continue his activism despite repeatedly being harassed by the Asayish and the Syrian government. In October 2016, Bashar Amin lost a son in the suicide bombing that targeted a wedding ceremony in Hasakeh city.

The arbitrary detention of Mohsen Taher, Amin Hussam and Bashar Amin is believed to be part of a calculated campaign of arrests of political activists and others by the Asayish across the area controlled by the PYD-led Autonomous Administration, commonly referred to as Rojava. Since 14 March 2017, the Asayish have arbitrarily arrested and detained numerous members and supporters of Kurdish opposition parties in Qamishli and in more than nine cities across Rojava.

The 13 leading members of the ENKS arrested by the Asayish on 9 May were: Fasla Youssef, Narin Matini, Mahmud Malla, Mohsen Taher, Abdelsamad Khalaf Biro, Fathi Gaddo, Ahmed Ajeh, Mahmoud Haj Ali, Farhad Tami, Mohamed Amin Hossam, Noreldin Fattah, Taher Hassaf, and Qassem Sherif.

These arrests happened as a result of ENKS continuing work following the closure of their offices by the Asayish on May 2 for operating an “unlicensed” organisation. On 7 May, the ENKS organized a sit-in in front of its main office in the Siyahi neighborhood in Qamishli, during which Mohsen Taher gave a speech denouncing the repressive practices of the PYD. At the end of the sit-in, Mohsen Taher reopened the ENKS main office and the members went back to operating it normally until their arrest by the Asayish on 9 May.

On 10 May, the Asayish forces arrested Mohamed Sido Ben Hassan in Afrin, an 80-year-old supporter of the ENKS. Mohamed Sido Ben Hassan was detained for 14 days, then put on public trial in his village Bilan, during which he died of a cardiac arrest.

A few days later, the Asayish forces arrested four additional members of the ENKS: Suleiman Oussou, Fouad Ibrahim, Nafeh Abdullah and Barzan Hussein who works as a reporter at Ark TV. All four remain in arbitrary detention at Allaya prison until now.

In 2014, the PYD along with a number of smaller political parties established an autonomous administration in three primarily Kurdish cantons in northern Syria: Afrin, Jazira (in Hasakeh governorate) and Ain al-Arab (Kobani). The PYD-led Administration has its own police force, courts, prisons, ministries and laws. The PYD also formed an army, the People’s Protection Unit (YPG), primarily responsible for protecting Kurdish held territory and for running military courts.

In August 2015, Amnesty International visited two central prisons under the control of the Asayish, in Qamishli and Malikiya. Amnesty International researchers documented the arbitrary detention of critics and others believed to be sympathizers or members of the armed group calling itself the Islamic State. Some people had been arbitrarily detained for periods up to a year without charge or trial. Those who did face trials were held in lengthy pre-trial detention and proceedings were blatantly unfair.

Name: Mohsen Taher, Amin Hussam and Bashar Amin
Gender m/f: All males

Further information on UA: 123/17 Index: MDE 24/6381/2017 Issue Date: 9 June 2017