

URGENT ACTION

TWO KURDISH ACTIVISTS FREED, THIRD STILL DETAINED
On July 10, Syrian Kurdish opposition activist Mohsen Taher was transferred to hospital due to a deterioration in his health. Amin Hussam and Bashar Amin, also Syrian Kurdish opposition activists, were released. The three had been arrested by the Asayish forces in May and detained at Allaya prison, north-eastern Syria.

Detained Syrian Kurdish opposition activist **Mohsen Taher** (49 years old) was transferred to Farman hospital on 10 July due to a deterioration in his health. He is a member of the Kurdish National Council in Syria (ENKS). **Amin Hussam** (58 years old) and **Bashar Amin** (70 years old), two other Syrian Kurdish opposition activists and also members of the ENKS, were released on 10 July.

Mohsen Taher and Amin Hussam were arrested by the Asayish forces, the police force of the Democratic Union Party (PYD)-led Autonomous Administration, on 9 May. Bashar Amin was arrested by the Asayish forces on 21 May. The three were detained at Allaya prison, in Qamishli city, north-eastern Syria, with no charge or access to lawyers.

Mohsen Taher was transferred to Farman hospital on 10 July where he underwent medical tests before being returned to Allaya prison around 5 pm. According to a relative, Mohsen Taher's family was able to communicate with him on 11 July, and he confirmed that he was returned to Allaya prison and that he is in a stable health condition. Prior to his transfer to hospital, Mohsen Taher confirmed to his family that he had still not been formally charged with any offence or had access to a lawyer.

"We are very worried about Mohsen's health condition, we heard that he had lost a lot of weight", the relative told Amnesty International.

Amin Hussam was released from detention on 10 July at 7pm. He suffers from chronic migraine and neuronal necrosis in his right leg, requiring continuous medication. His health condition is stable.

Bashar Amin was released on 10 July at 9:15pm for medical treatment as he suffers a chronic heart condition and requires proper medical care and nutrition. Bashar Amin is currently receiving proper medical care.

The men were held in poor detention conditions in Allaya prison and suffered from severe weight loss as a result of insufficient food. Their relatives said that they were struggling to cope with the high temperatures inside their cell due to a lack of proper ventilation systems.

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

- Urging the Asayish forces to release Mohsen Taher immediately or charge him with a recognizable offence, in line with international law and standards;
- Urging them to ensure that pending his release, he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment, granted access to their family and lawyers, and the urgent medical treatment that his condition requires.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 23 AUGUST 2017 TO:

Head of Asayish

Ciwan Ibrahim

Email: asayisraghandin@gmail.com

Twitter: @ciwanbrahim

Salutation: Mr

Co-president of the Democratic Union

Party (PYD)

Salih Maslem Mohamed

Twitter: @serokepyd

Salutation: Mr

The Syrian embassy in the UK has been temporarily closed.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 123/17. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE24/6381/2017/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Bashar Amin was formerly captured 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 in May 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 May 7, 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. On 24 June, Suleiman Oussou was released for medical treatment due to his critical heart condition, but the other three men 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.

Further information on UA: 123/17 Index: MDE 24/6710/2017 Issue Date: 12 July 2017