

URGENT ACTION

SYRIAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER EXECUTED

On 1 August, the family of Syrian-Palestinian human rights activist Bassel Khartabil Safadi received the news that he was extrajudicially executed in October 2015. This happened shortly after he was transferred from 'Adra prison in Damascus to an undisclosed location in Syria on 3 October 2015.

Bassel Khartabil Safadi's family confirmed on 1 August that he had been extrajudicially executed in October 2015. On 3 October 2015, the Syrian authorities transferred him from Adra prison, where he had been held since 2012, to an undisclosed location. Bassel Khartabil Safadi had been forcibly disappeared since the day of this transfer. He had managed to inform his family that he had been told to collect his belongings as he would be transferred. However, he was not told where he would be taken. During this time, his fate and whereabouts were unknown.

Bassel Khartabil Safadi was initially arrested on 15 March 2012 by Syrian Military Intelligence agents in the al-Mezzeh area of Damascus. He was detained incommunicado by the Military Intelligence until November 2012. His family was not informed of his whereabouts during that period. He was afterwards transferred to 'Adra prison in Damascus, then to a Military Field Court and eventually to Saydnaya Military Prison on 9 December 2012. When he was returned to 'Adra prison in late December 2012, he said that he had been tortured and otherwise ill-treated while detained at Saydnaya Military Prison.

Bassel Khartabil Safadi later told his family that his questioning before the Military Field Court took roughly one minute and he was not told its conclusion. Proceedings before Military Field Courts are grossly unfair. Defendants have no legal representation and scant opportunities to defend themselves. The courts' decisions are binding and not subject to appeal. Military Field Courts can hand down death sentences.

Bassel Khartabil Safadi, 34 years old, was a Palestinian resident in Syria, who had worked as a software engineer until his arrest, specializing in open-source software development. He had received international recognition for his work in software engineering and peaceful activism. The magazine Foreign Policy named him in its list of the Top 100 Global Thinkers of 2012. Though he was arrested just weeks before his wedding was due to take place, he was able to marry his fiancée in 'Adra prison on 7 January 2013.

It is not known why Bassel Khartabil Safadi was arrested, but it is likely to have been because of his activities as a peaceful activist and advocate for the right to freedom of expression.

Thank you to all those who sent appeals. No further action is requested from the UA network.

This is the first update of UA 220/15. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde24/2603/2015/en/>

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