

Joint statement calling for the release of "Madaya activists"

We, the undersigned civil organizations, condemn the arrest of activists Amjad al-Maleh, Hussam Mahmoud, Hassan Younis and Bakr Younis in the city of Idlib in early December 2017. We declare our solidarity with the detainees and our support them until their release.

The four are prominent activists in their area and had a wide impact in exposing abuses by Syrian government forces and the Lebanese militia Hezbollah during the siege of Madaya. At a time when there was a siege on the city, these activists contributed to broadcasting the situation to outside and support to civilians in all ways they could, despite the harsh conditions experienced by the city. In the first half of 2017, an unknown party attempted to assassinate Amjad al-Maleh.

According to information received from activists in Idlib, members of Haya'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) arrested the activists Hussam Mahmoud (31-years-old) and Hassan Younis (28-years-old) on 10 December 2017 while they were in al-Qusour neighborhood in Idlib city, with the accusation that they had filmed areas belonging to HTS. On 12 December 2017 activist Bakr Younis (23-years-old), Hassan's brother, was arrested. He was followed by the arrest of activist Amjad Abdulaziz Al-Maleh (29-years-old) on 13 December 2017. The latter two were arrested in front of their places of residence in the city of Idlib on charges of "media work against HTS" according to sources from HTS.

The Syrian Journalists Association indicated in a report to the arrest of the four activists that HTS had issued an announcement October 2017 urging not to harass or arrest channel and media correspondents in the governorate of Idlib, whether they have a clearance to film or not.

We believe in the importance of civil work within Syria and the need to support it and support the people that are working within this field in all possible ways, therefore:

- (1) We hold the de facto forces in these areas responsible for the safety of the four activists.
- (2) We demand that these forces release the activists immediately and unconditionally.
- (3) We stress the necessity of the commitment of these forces not to harass or detain employees in civil society institutions and to protect them when necessary.

Signatories:

1. Afaq Center for Legal Studies and Consultations.
2. Al Kawakibi Organisation for Human Rights.
3. Al-Marsad – Arab Human Rights Center in Golan Heights.
4. Baytna Syria.
5. Fraternity Foundation for Human Rights.
6. Free Academics Council.
7. Free Diplomats Council.

8. Free Judges Council Inside Syria.
9. Free National Assembly of Syrian State Organisations' Employees.
10. Free Parliamentarians Council.
11. Kawakbi Center for Transitional Justice and Human Rights.
12. Local Administration Council of Free National Assembly.
13. Local Administration Councils Unit.
14. Medical Council of Free National Assembly.
15. Revolutionary Mobility Office in Homs.
16. Save the Rest Campaign.
17. Syrian Activists Monitoring.
18. Syrian Center for Legal Studies and Research.
19. Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression.
20. Syrian Revolution Coordinators Unit.
21. Syrian Revolutionary Mobility – Istanbul Office.
22. Syrian Revolutionary Mobility Authority.
23. Syrians for Truth and Justice.
24. The Day After.
25. Violations Documentation Center.
26. Women Council of Free National Assembly.
27. Working Group for Syria.