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Treatment of professionals by the government and information on whether they are being arrested?

A report by the *United States Department of State* under the heading “Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life” states:

“The government also reportedly continued to torture detainees to death. Among the groups specifically targeted by the regime were artists, playwrights, and other members of the artistic community. On July 25, according to multiple media outlets, state police in Homs reportedly tortured the artist Wael Qastun to death. Also in July police forces tortured the singer Ibrahim Qashush, including cutting his vocal cords and ripping them out in retaliation for his popular protest song. There were no arrests or prosecutions in either case.” (United States Department of State (19 April 2013) *Syria 2012 Human Rights Report*)

In a section titled “Arrest Procedures and Treatment While in Detention” it states:

“Throughout the country authorities also arbitrarily detained doctors providing assistance to persons wounded in political violence and held them incommunicado. These included Dr. Ahmed Taleb Kurdi and Dr. Ahmad al-Khansa from Salamiya, in the governorate of Hama, on May 5, and Dr. Jalal Noful, a psychiatrist, in Damascus on April 22. Drs. Kurdi and Khansa were released, but there was no further information on the location or welfare of Dr. Noful. The SNHR reported that 143 medical professionals were killed and 3,000 arrested; 13 died of torture while in detention...” (ibid)

It also states under the heading “Freedom of Speech and Press”

“The government systematically arrested journalists either associated with or writing in favor of the political opposition or the FSA and instigated attacks against foreign press outlets throughout the country...” (ibid)

A report by *Human Rights Watch* under the heading “Arbitrary Arrests, Enforced Disappearances, Torture, and Deaths in Custody” states:

“Security forces subjected tens of thousands of people to arbitrary arrests, unlawful detentions, enforced disappearances, ill-treatment, and torture using an extensive network of detention facilities throughout Syria. Many detainees were young men in their 20s or 30s, but children, women, and elderly people were also included.

Those arrested include peaceful protesters and activists involved in organizing, filming, and reporting on protests, as well as journalists, humanitarian assistance providers, and doctors...” (Human Rights Watch (31 January 2013) *World Report 2013 – Syria*)

The report continues:

“In one case on February 16, Air Force intelligence forces raided the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM) and arrested 16 people, including seven women. In September, seven members of the SCM staff were charged and convicted of publishing banned documents with the intent to change the basic principles of the constitution. Five of the men arrested – including Mazen Darwish, the group's president – remain in incommunicado detention.” (ibid)

A report by *Front Line (Ireland)* notes:

“In the early morning of 2 October 2012, prominent Syrian human rights defender Mr Khalil Matouk was arrested on his way to work by security forces. His place of detention is currently unknown.

Khalil Matouk is a prominent human rights lawyer who provides legal assistance to victims of human rights abuses in Syria, including to fellow human rights defenders. Khalil Matouk, who is a member of the Syrian Bar Association, is also the executive director of the Syrian Centre for Legal Studies and Research.

Moreover, the human rights defender is suffering from a serious lung disease and he is in need of constant medical care due to his precarious condition.” (Front Line (Ireland) (8 October 2012) *Syria: Arrest of prominent human rights defender Mr Khalil Matouk*)

A report by the *UN Human Rights Council* under the heading “Targeting of medical personnel and transport” states:

“One of the most insidious trends of the armed violence in Syria has been the targeting of healthcare personnel. Ambulance drivers, nurses, doctors and medical volunteers have been attacked, arrested, unlawfully detained, and disappeared. Antiterrorism laws issued on 2 July 2012 effectively criminalised medical aid to the opposition. Laws 19, 20 and 21 contravene the customary international humanitarian law rule that under no circumstances shall any person be punished for carrying out medical activities compatible with medical ethics, regardless of the person benefiting therefrom.” (UN Human Rights Council (13 September 2013) *Assault on medical care in Syria* - par.21)

References:

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

Sources Consulted:

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