

**URGENT: PLEASE PASS THIS MESSAGE TO YOUR FELLOW STAKEHOLDERS, ESPECIALLY THOSE FROM GOVERNMENT. ASK THAT THEY REACH OUT TO SYRIAN AUTHORITIES TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF INTERNET PIONEER BASSEL KHARTABIL**

November 12, Internet Governance Forum, João Pessoa, Brazil -

Bassel Khartabil, one of the most respected figures in the Syrian Internet technical community, has been held without charge by the Syrian authorities for three years. On October 3 of this year, he was removed from his civilian cell in Adra prison, and, it is believed, transferred to the secret military field court system.

Today rumors from sources close to the regime have indicated that **Bassel may have been secretly sentenced to death.**

**The Internet community calls on the governments of the world to reach out to the Syrian authorities immediately and urge them to reveal Bassel's condition and location to his family and legal representatives, and to exercise clemency in his case.**

**Bassel's detention is arbitrary and in violation of international human rights law.** The refusal of the authorities to reveal his whereabouts is an enforced disappearance. His prosecution do not meet the standards of a fair trial. Bassel can and should be unconditionally released to the care of his family.

Bassel remains a significant and beloved figure in the Syrian and global Internet communities. During the years before the Syrian civil war, he used his technical expertise to help advance freedom of speech and access to information online for all Syrians. He co-founded [Aiki Lab](#), a shared networking space in Damascus, led the Creative Commons Syria project, and regularly contributed code and content to open and free Internet resources such as Mozilla, Wikipedia, the Open Font Library and the Open Clipart Library. As members of the European Parliament, Charles Tannock and Ana Gomes, noted in their 2013 address to the European Commission on behalf of Bassel, “it is strongly suspected that [Bassel's] arrest was part of an effort to restrict access to online communities and discourses and stifle free expression in Syria.”

The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has declared Bassel's detention [a violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#), and called for his release. Khartabil has received a number of awards including the [2013 Index on Censorship Digital Freedom Award](#) for using technology to promote an open and free Internet. *Foreign Policy* magazine named Khartabil one of its [Top 100 Global Thinkers](#) of 2012, “for insisting, against all odds, on a peaceful Syrian revolution.” In recent weeks, he was offered a position as research scientist at the MIT Media Lab. The Director of the lab, Joi Ito, [wrote](#) that Bassel is “an important world citizen and a true Syrian trying to protect the heritage of the country... a pardon would be a tremendous show of good will and a contribution to the preservation of Syrian culture.”

**More information:**

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/get-involved/take-action-now/syria-release-bassel-khartabil-ua-22015>

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/11/04/syria-no-word-activists-whereabouts>

<https://www.eff.org/offline/bassel-khartabil>

<http://www.freebassel.org/>

**Campaign contacts at IGF:**

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Please email us to report any contacts or feedback on this alert.

**PLEASE PASS ON NEWS OF BASSEL TO YOUR COMMUNITY AND ONLINE  
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