

17 May 2017

Syria: Journalist Barzan Hussein detained in unknown location

On 13 May 2017 at approximately 12.30pm members of the Asayish, Kurdish security forces known to be affiliated with the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD), arrested journalist and human rights defender, **Barzan Hussein**, in Rmelan town in al-Hassakah Governorate in northeast Syria and detained him in an unknown location.

[Barzan Hussein](#) is a Kurdish journalist and leading member of the Kurdish Union of Writers. He is also a correspondent for Zagros TV, a Kurdish language television station broadcasting from Erbil, Iraq. In his media work, he is active in defending the cultural and linguistic rights of Kurdish people in Syria. Barzan Hussein has criticised human rights abuses committed by the Kurdish authorities in northern Syria, especially the hostile behaviour of the PYD towards Kurdish journalists and media outlets.

The PYD is the de facto authority which controls areas in north and northeast Syria. The PYD gained control in 2012 following the withdrawal of Syrian government forces from the predominantly Kurdish areas. In January 2014, the PYD and its allies established an interim authority in these areas. PYD is a Syrian affiliate of the militant Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Through its security forces, the PYD has repeatedly harassed, detained and abducted dozens of journalists, human rights defenders and political rivals.

The abduction of Barzan Hussein coincided with Asayish detaining a number of leading members of the Syrian Democratic Council on 8 and 9 May in the cities of Qamishli and Kobani. Barzan Hussein received death threats in 2015 and has been briefly detained three times since 2013.

Front Line Defenders condemns the detention of Barzan Hussein, as it believes it to be in retaliation to his legitimate and peaceful media work and his defence of Kurdish people's human rights.

Front Line Defenders urges the de facto authorities in northern Syria to:

1. Declare **Barzan Hussein's** whereabouts and take all necessary measures to guarantee his physical and psychological integrity;
2. Immediately and unconditionally release him and ensure his liberty and security and cease all forms of harassment against him;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all journalists and human rights defenders in northern Syria are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.