



EURO-MEDITERRANEAN HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK
RÉSEAU EURO-MÉDITERRANÉEN DES DROITS DE L'HOMME
الشبكة الأوروبية - المتوسطية لحقوق الإنسان



un programme conjoint
OMCT **fidh**
Réseau SOS-Torture
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des Droits de l'Homme



Fédération Euroméditerranéenne Contre les Disparitions Forcées
Euromediterranean Federation Against Enforced Disappearances

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

SYRIA: Relatives of activists targeted in retaliation

Copenhagen, Geneva, Paris. September 1, 2011- The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN), the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), and the Euromediterranean Federation against enforced disappearances (FEMED) strongly condemn the Syrian authorities for intensifying arbitrary arrests and systematic acts of harassment against human rights defenders as well as pro-democracy activists and members of their families.

On August 30 2011, the Air Force Intelligence, one of the many security bodies active in Syria, arrested Mr. Yassine Ziadeh in the Damascus area of Daraya. His whereabouts remained unknown at the time of publication. Our organizations fear that he may be subjected to acts of ill treatment or torture in the current intensification of the repression against the social protest movement and their alleged supporters.

Mr. Yassine Ziadeh is the brother of Mr. Radwan Ziadeh, President of the Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies (DCHRS), a member organisation of EMHRN and FIDH. He is a businessman and has reportedly not been involved in the movement of protest nor in human rights activities.

“This arrest is a new illustration of the systematic campaign of repression led by the Syrian authorities against all dissenting voices and human rights defenders”, stated Kamel Jendoubi, EMHRN President. “The Syrian authorities should immediately stop the targeting of relatives of human rights defenders. Clearly this is done to intimidate them or to force them to surrender.”

“Again the authorities demonstrate the little consideration they have for the respect of basic human rights standards. This calls for a strong condemnation by the international community”, said Souhayr Belhassen, FIDH President.

Since the beginning of the unrest in Syria, Mr. Radwan Ziadeh - who is exiled in the US - has played an active role in denouncing the continuous degradation of the human rights situation in the country. Due to his activities, Mr. Radwan Ziadeh has been repeatedly submitted to threats as well as smearing campaigns in Syria¹. Members of his family who still live in Syria have been banned from traveling abroad since February 2007.

1 See EMHRN and the Observatory Joint Press Release, April 15, 2011.

“The fight of Radwan Ziadeh to shed light on international crimes committed in Syria and for the truth to be made in cases of enforced disappearances should be encouraged not hindered!”, said Nassera Dutour, FEMED President.

Since the beginning of the uprising in the country, the Syrian security apparatus has, on numerous occasions, targeted human rights and pro-democracy activists through members of their families. On August 20, 2011, the security apparatus arrested Mr. Mohammed Khair Ghalioun, the brother of pro-democracy activist Bourhan Ghalioun, based in France. A few weeks before that, Mr. Wael Hamada, the husband of prominent human rights lawyer Razan Zeituna and Wael’s brother Abdulrahman Hamada were also arrested in a bid to force her to surrender. Family members of activist Dana Ibrahim Aljawabra and human rights and pro-democracy activist Ali Al Abdallah were also subjected to similar arrests in July 2011. These cases are not isolated and appear to lie in the framework of a systematic and deliberate strategy.

“Targeting family member brings us back to the Middle Ages”, said Gerald Staberock, OMCT Secretary General. *“The fact that these events come only days after the UN Human Rights Council had condemned Syria for its human rights violations following the report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights shows the defiance to the human rights system. We need urgently an end to such violations. And we need international accountability for those responsible for such atrocious acts”*, he added.

The EMHRN, the Observatory and the FEMED urge the Syrian authorities to put an end to all acts of harassment against human rights defenders and pro-democracy activists to immediately and unconditionally release all persons arbitrarily detained and to conform in all circumstances with the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (1998) as well as international human rights instruments, which bind the Syrian authorities.

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