

PRESS RELEASE - THE OBSERVATORY

Human rights defenders more than ever at risk

Publication of the Observatory Annual Report 2011

Geneva-New York-Paris, October 24, 2011. The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (the Observatory) releases today its 14th Annual Report on the situation of human rights defenders during a press conference held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. While the revolutions that took place in the Arab world in 2011 reminded the international community of the emergency to put the issue of human rights back at the top of its political agenda, utmost attention must be paid to the alerts made by human rights defenders worldwide, and no compromise must be made towards the harassment they face.

The release of the Annual Report is a key momentum of the daily activity of the Observatory. This report tells of the struggle of human rights defenders in about 70 countries - civil society activists, journalists, trade-unionists, lawyers or simple citizens "indignant" at injustice, arbitrariness, or horror.

The document highlights the universality of the claims raised by the "Arab Spring". As pointed out by Stéphane Hessel and Aung San Suu Kyi in the foreword to the report, *"everywhere, respect for human rights was at the heart of the peoples' claims, (...) These movements did not feed on identity, religious or cultural politics, but were rather founded on the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (...)"*.

"At the same time", FIDH President Souhayr Belhassen says, "human rights defenders are more than ever at risk. As the Report is being published, the blood bath continues in Syria, in Libya and in Yemen. In Africa, the Middle East, Europe, Americas, Asia, human rights defenders are harassed, imprisoned, sometimes tortured".

For OMCT Secretary General Gerald Staberock, *"far from being recognised for what they are - vital protagonists for change, the guarantors of a free society - human rights defenders are, on the contrary, subjected daily to repression by regimes that are all the harsher for having understood the force and the legitimacy of their claims"*. *"The present report calls for stronger protection for those involved in human rights and democracy"*, he concludes.

NEW YORK - MONDAY 24 OCTOBER 2011 at 2.30 pm (8.30 pm GMT)
PRESS CONFERENCE for the international launch of the 2011 Annual Report of the
Observatory
United Nations - Briefing Room - NEW YORK
"Defenders of the world: the year of Arab revolutions"

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), accompanies, follows and protects human rights defenders at risk throughout the year.

The report is under embargo until Monday 24 October 2011, 8.30 pm GMT, and is available on the following links :

http://www.omct.org/files/2011/10/21443/obs_2011_uk.pdf
http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/obs_2011_uk-complet.pdf

The press kit is available on the following links:

http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/dpobs2011_final-eng-ldb.pdf
http://www.omct.org/files/2011/10/21443/eng_press_kit_obs_2011_ldb.pdf

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