

PRESS RELEASE - THE OBSERVATORY

SYRIA: Concern for the enforced disappearance of 3 human rights defenders

Paris-Geneva, May 19, 2015 – Three prominent human rights defenders arbitrarily detained since February 2012 for promoting and protecting human rights in Syria were last seen on May 3, 2015. The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (an FIDH-OMCT joint programme) is deeply concerned by their enforced disappearance and calls for their immediate and unconditional release.

Messrs. **Mazen Darwish, Hani Al-Zaitani** and **Hussain Ghrer**, respectively President and members of the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM), who are arbitrarily detained since February 2012, for promoting freedom of expression and monitoring gross human rights violations committed in the country have been unaccounted for since May 3, 2015.

On several occasions, visits to the Adra Prison, where Messrs. **Mazen Darwish, Hani Al-Zaitani** and **Hussain Ghrer** had been transferred ahead of a verdict hearing scheduled on May 13, 2015, were unsuccessful. On May 10, 2015, prison authorities stated that the three defenders were not within the premises of the prison, as they had been summonsed for interrogation outside of the prison.

Furthermore, on May 13, 2015 the prison authorities failed to present the three detainees before court for a verdict hearing scheduled for that day. The trial, which has already been rescheduled 23 times since February 2013, was therefore suspended until June 1, 2015.

“Syrian authorities should immediately disclose the fate and whereabouts of Mazen Darwish, Hani Al-Zaitani and Hussain Ghrer and put an end to the practice of enforced disappearance”, said FIDH President, Karim Lahidji.

On May 3, 2015, Mazen Darwish was awarded the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize “in recognition of the work that he has carried out in Syria for more than ten years at great personal sacrifice, enduring a travel ban, harassment, as well as repeated detention and torture”.

During nine months in 2012, the three were held in conditions amounting to enforced disappearance and subjected to acts of torture. There has been no investigation into these abuses.

The Observatory recalls that the UN General Assembly, in its Resolution 67/262 adopted on May 15, 2013 called for the release of the three defenders. In January 2014, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) also found that the three defenders had been arbitrarily deprived of their liberty due to their human rights activities and called for their immediate release. UN Security Council Resolution 2139, adopted on February 22, 2014, also demanded the release of all arbitrarily detained people in Syria.

“Syrian authorities should listen to UN calls and immediately and unconditionally release Messrs. Mazen Darwish, Hani Al-Zaitani and Hussain Ghrer as their detention is arbitrary and only aims at preventing them from carrying out their legitimate and peaceful human rights activities in Syria”, said OMCT Secretary General Gerald Staberock.

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (OBS) was created in 1997 by [FIDH](#) and [OMCT](#). The objective of this programme is to intervene to prevent or remedy to situations of repression against human rights defenders.

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