

URGENT APPEAL - THE OBSERVATORY

SYR 004 / 0311 / OBS 043

Arbitrary arrest / Incommunicado detention /
Fear for psychological and physical integrity

Syrian Arab Republic

March 24, 2011

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), has received new information and requests your urgent intervention on the following situation in **Syria**.

Description of the situation:

The Observatory has been informed by reliable sources of the arbitrary arrest of Mr. **Mazen Darwish**, Director of the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM).

According to the information received, Mr. Mazen Darwish went at noon on March 23, 2011 at the political police headquarters in Almayyat in Damascus after being summoned by a high officer, who called him in the morning. Since then, no further information could be obtained on Mr. Mazen Darwish's fate and whereabouts.

The Observatory recalls that on March 16, 2011, Mr. Mazen Darwish was among the activists arrested at the occasion of a peaceful rally before the Ministry of the Interior organised to call for the release of all prisoners of conscience in Syria.¹

The Observatory is deeply concerned by the arrest of Mr. Mazen Darwish and fears for his physical and psychological integrity. The Observatory calls upon the Syrian authorities to take prompt action in order to disclose the fate and whereabouts of Mr. Mazen Darwish and release him immediately as his arrest seems to merely aim at sanctioning his human rights activities.

Actions requested:

Please write to the Syrian authorities, urging them to:

- i. Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Mr. Mazen Darwish;
- ii. Take prompt action in order to disclose the fate and whereabouts of Mr. Mazen Darwish and release him, as his arrest seems to merely aim at sanctioning his human rights activities;
- iii. Order an immediate, thorough, effective and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned facts, the result of which must be made public, in order to identify all those responsible, bring them before a civil competent and impartial tribunal and apply to them the penal sanctions provided by the law;
- iv. Put an end to any kind of harassment against all human rights defenders in Syria;
- v. Conform with the provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 9, 1998, especially:

¹ See urgent appeals SYR 003 / 0311 / OBS 037 and SYR 003 / 0311 / OBS 037.1.

- its Article 1, which states that “everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels”;
- its Article 5 (a), which states that “for the purpose of promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, at the national and international levels to meet or assemble peacefully”;
- and its Article 12.2, which provides that “the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration”;

vi. Ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by the Syrian Arab Republic.

Addresses:

- President, His Excellency Bashar al-Assad, Presidential Palace, al Rashid Street, Damascus, Syria Arab Republic, Fax: +963 11 332 3410;
- Minister of Defence, His Excellency General, Ali Habib Mahmud, Ministry of Defence, O mayyad Square, Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic, Fax: +963 11 223 7842;
- Minister of Justice, His Excellency Mr. Ahmad Hamod Younes, Mazeh “Otstrad”, Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic, Fax: +963 11 666 2460
- Minister of Foreign Affairs, His Excellency Wallid Mu’allim, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, al-Rashid Street, Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic, Fax: +963 11 332 7620;
- Ambassador Faysal Khabbaz Hamoui, Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to UN in Geneva, 72 rue de Lausanne, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland, Fax: +41 22 738 42 75, Email: mission.syria@ties.itu.in;
- Embassy the Syrian Arab Republic in Brussels, 1 avenue F.D. Roosevelt, 1050 Brussels, Belgium, Tel: +32 2 554 19 22; Fax: +32 2 648 14 85.

Please also write to the diplomatic mission or embassy of the Syrian Arabic Republic in your respective country.

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Paris-Geneva, March 24, 2011

Kindly inform us of any action undertaken quoting the code of this appeal in your reply.

The Observatory, a FIDH and OMCT venture, is dedicated to the protection of Human Rights Defenders and aims to offer them concrete support in their time of need.

To contact the Observatory, call the emergency line:

E-mail: Appeals@fidh-omct.org

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