

URGENT APPEAL - THE OBSERVATORY

SYR 005 / 0411 / OBS 071

Arbitrary detention / Judicial harassment

Syria

April 29, 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), requests your urgent intervention in the following situation in **Syria**.

Description of the situation:

The Observatory has been informed by reliable sources about the arbitrary detention and the judicial harassment against Mr. **Rasim Al-Atassi Suleyman**, member of the board of directors of the Arab Organisation for Human Rights in Syria (AOHR-S) and former President of the same organisation.

According to the information received, on April 27, 2011, Mr. Rasim Al-Atassi appeared before the Military Public Prosecutor of Homs after having been summoned. There, he was questioned by the military prosecutor and formally charged of "inciting riots" and "vandalism"¹. He was then taken to the Central Prison of Homs where he is currently detained.

Mr. Rasim Al-Atassi Suleyman was allegedly denounced by two demonstrators arrested approximately two weeks ago in Homs, by officers from the Intelligence and Security services. They declared that Mr. Rasim Al-Atassi Suleyman was financially supporting the protest movements and supplying weapons. Later, they retracted their declarations.

The Observatory expresses its deepest concern about the arbitrary detention of Mr. Rasim Al-Atassi Suleyman and the judicial harassment he is facing which seem to merely aim at sanctioning his human rights activities.

The Observatory further calls upon the Syrian authorities to take prompt action in order to immediately and unconditionally drop the charges against him as they are baseless and release him, as well as all human rights defenders presently detained in the country. This arbitrary arrest illustrates once more the extreme harassment faced by human rights defenders in a context of increasing violent crackdown against peaceful protesters by army and security forces in Syria since March 16, 2011.

Actions requested:

Please write to the Syrian authorities, urging them to:

- i. Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Mr. Rasim Al-Atassi Suleyman;
- ii. Drop the charges pending against Mr. Rasim Al-Atassi Suleyman as they are arbitrary ;
- iii. Ensure the immediate and unconditionally release of Mr. Rasim Al-Atassi Suleyman since his detention is arbitrary as it only aims at sanctioning his human rights activities;

¹ Under the state of emergency, a military prosecutor has had the power to formally charge somebody.

iv. Put an end to any acts of harassment, including at the judicial level, against Mr. Rasim Al-Atassi Suleyman and more generally 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:

- 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 6 (b) and (c), which states that “Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others [...] as provided for in human rights and other applicable international instruments, freely to publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and knowledge on all human rights and fundamental freedoms and [...] to study, discuss, form and hold opinions on the observance, both in law and in practice, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and, through these and other appropriate means, to draw public attention to those matters”.

- 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. Tayzeer Qala Awwad, 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 Bashar Ja'afari, 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.

Paris-Geneva, April 29, 2011

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

To contact the Observatory, call the emergency line:

- E-mail: Appeals@fidh-omct.org
- Tel and fax FIDH + 33 (0) 1 43 55 25 18 / +33 1 43 55 18 80
- Tel and fax OMCT + 41 (0) 22 809 49 39 / + 41 22 809 49 29