

## URGENT APPEAL - THE OBSERVATORY

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**SYR 006 / 0511 / OBS 075**

Abduction / Incommunicado detention /  
Fear for psychological and physical integrity  
**Syria**

May 16, 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 abduction and incommunicado detention of Ms. **Catherine Altalli**, a lawyer and human right defender who has been involved since 2007 in the defence of numerous political prisoners before Syrian courts.

According to the information received, on May 13, 2011, at around 4 pm, Ms. Catherine Altalli was forced out of a minibus in Barzeh, Damascus, by members of the security forces who arrested her and brought her to an unknown destination. Since then, no information could be obtained on her whereabouts and condition.

The Observatory is deeply concerned by Ms. Catherine Altalli's abduction and incommunicado detention, which seem to merely aim at sanctioning her human rights activities, and fears for her physical and psychological integrity amid the current general crackdown against peaceful protesters by army and security forces in Syria since March 16, 2011. The Observatory calls upon the Syrian authorities to take prompt action in order to disclose Ms. Catherine Altalli's whereabouts and release her immediately.

The Observatory further calls upon the Syrian authorities to take prompt action in order to immediately and unconditionally release all human rights defenders presently detained in the country.

### **Actions requested:**

Please write to the Syrian authorities, urging them to:

- i. Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Ms. Catherine Altalli;
- ii. Take prompt action in order to disclose the whereabouts of Ms. Catherine Altalli and immediately and unconditionally release her, as it seems to merely aim at sanctioning her human rights activities;
- iii. Put an end to any acts of harassment and intimidation against all human rights defenders in Syria;
- iv. 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”;

v. 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, Ministry of Justice, 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.int](mailto:mission.syria@ties.itu.int)
- Embassy of 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, May 16, 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](mailto: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