

URGENT APPEAL - THE OBSERVATORY

SYR 016 / 1211 / OBS 135

Incommunicado detention / Ill-treatments /
Fear for psychological and physical integrity /
Arrest attempt

Syria

December 7, 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 acts of harassment, arbitrary detention and torture against several human rights lawyers in Syria.

According to the information received, as of December 6, 2011, Mr. **Abdul Salam Al-Atrash** remained detained in an unknown location without charge and no information was given by the authorities on his status and condition. Mr. Abdul Salam Al-Atrash was arrested without a warrant by military security officers on September 12, 2011 at his place of residence in Aleppo (Hamdania). No charges were reportedly brought against him. Mr. Al-Atrash was last seen at the branch of military security in Damascus, where he was severely tortured, in critical health and suffering from a mental breakdown.

In addition, Mr. **Hussam Al-Assaad**, member of the Idleb branch of the Bar Association, was arrested in late November, and was subjected to harsh torture at the Military Intelligence Branch in Aleppo. Several parts of his body were allegedly skinned off. Mr. Hussam Al-Assaad would require urgent medical care. At the time of publication of this appeal, Mr. Abdul Salam Al-Atrash was still detained in an unknown location without charge and no information was given by the authorities on his status and condition.

Security forces and semi-security forces raided the home of Mr. **Ali Badran** in Tel Rfat, as well as the houses of Messrs. **Youssef Horan** and **Mohamed Haji Abdullah** in Aleppo, who escaped arrest attempts, respectively on November 8, December 2 and November 30, 2011. Their names were reportedly sent to all the branches of the intelligence services. To date, the three remain in hiding to escape arbitrary arrest and torture.

The Observatory strongly condemns the acts mentioned above which target human rights lawyers, and urges the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release those detained, allow them immediate access to medical care, and more generally put an end to any kind of harassment against them, as this seems to only aim at sanctioning their 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 Messrs Abdul Salam Al-Atrash, Hussam Al-Assaad, Ali Badran, Youssef Horan and Mohamed Haji Abdullah, and more generally all human rights defenders in Syria;
- ii. Disclose the whereabouts of, and release immediately and unconditionally Messrs. Abdul Salam Al-Atrash and Hussam Al-Assaad, as their arrest seems to merely aim at sanctioning their human rights activities;

iii. Put an end to any kind of harassment - including at the judicial level - against Messrs. Abdul Salam Al-Atrash, Hussam Al-Assad, Ali Badran, Joseph Horan and Mohamed Haji Abdullah, and more generally 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. 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.

Paris-Geneva, December 7, 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