



EURO-MEDITERRANEAN HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK
RÉSEAU EURO-MÉDITERRANÉEN DES DROITS DE L'HOMME
الشبكة الأوروبية - المتوسطية لحقوق الإنسان



a joint programme



The Observatory
for the Protection
of Human Rights Defenders

PRESS RELEASE

LEBANON: End the judicial harassment of human rights activists

Copenhagen-Geneva-Paris - March 24, 2011: *The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) and the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), denounces the judicial harassment against representatives of the Lebanese Centre for Human Rights (CLDH), who were convened by the criminal investigation service at the Ministry of Justice following a criminal complaint that was filed after the publication of a report on human rights.*

For the second time in less than a week, Ms. **Marie Daunay** and Mr. **Wadih Al-Asmar**, CLDH members, were summoned by the criminal investigation service of Beirut, following a complaint alleging that the report published on February 10, 2011 by the organisation, entitled *Arbitrary Detention and Torture: the Bitter Reality of Lebanon*, contains "false accusations" and "incitement to religious hatred". During interrogation, the two human rights activists described the serious human rights work done by CLDH, its actions and activities in Lebanon, and explained the methodology used when writing their report. However, to protect their sources, they invoked Article 47 of the Criminal Procedure Code concerning the right to remain silent.

Despite their repeated requests, neither of them could have access to the criminal complaint, which seems to have been directly filed by Mr. Nabih Berri, Amal representative and Chairman of Parliament. After more than three hours of questioning the CLDH left the crime squad and the Attorney General, Mr. Said Mirza, must now decide on the follow-up to the criminal complaint.

The EMHRN and the Observatory are concerned about the criminal proceedings, which seem to be motivated solely by a willingness to silence any criticism of the human rights situation in Lebanon. They reiterate their full support with members of CLDH and urge the Lebanese authorities to:

- Ensure in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of members of CLDH as well as of all human rights defenders in Lebanon;
- Put an end to all forms of harassment and intimidation against members of CLDH and, more generally, against human rights defenders in Lebanon so they can conduct their activities freely;
- Comply with the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1998;
- Comply with the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified by Lebanon on March 23, 1976, in particular its Article 19 on freedom of expression, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other regional and international human rights instruments ratified by Lebanon.

Our organizations also call on the EU to ensure compliance with Article 2 of the Association Agreement EU / Lebanon and to implement fully and visibly the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders.

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