

URGENT APPEAL – THE OBSERVATORY

New information
SYR 002/0404/OBS 026.1
Arbitrary detention / ill treatments
Syria
June 22, 2004

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, joint program of the FIDH and the OMCT, requests your urgent intervention in the following situation in Syria.

New information :

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (the Observatory) is deeply concerned about the pressures and the continuous harassment against the human rights defenders in Syria.

The Observatory was informed that on June 20, the family of Aktham Naisse, president of the Committees for the Defense of Democratic Liberties and Human Rights in Syria (CDF), was allowed to visit him in the Saidnaya prison where has been imprisoned since April 22, 2004.

According to Mr. Naisse's family, the interview was very short. Partially paralysed since the beginning of his detention, Mr. Naisse was “dragged” along by his guards out of his cell and brought to a place where his family only saw him briefly. He only had time to tell his relatives that he was detained in very bad conditions and informed them that he had begun a hunger strike.

The Observatory is concerned about the health of Mr. Naisse because he is diabetic and strictly requires daily medical treatment.

Background :

Mr. Aktham Naisse was arrested in Lattaquié on April 13, 2004 by military security. On April 22, he was charged with, among other charges, “propagation of false information and attempting the objectives of a revolution” by the Supreme Security Court of the State. Since then, he has been jailed in Saidnaya prison where he is placed in solitary confinement. During the first week, he suffered from a stroke which left him partially paralyzed. His health, already precarious, is deteriorating and he is unable to receive the necessary medical treatment.

The Observatory recalls that Mr. Aktham Naisse has been continually harassed for many years because of his involvement in human rights in Syria, in particular by recurrent interrogations and notifications (see the Observatory's Annual Report 2003).

Action Requested :

Please write to the Syrian authorities and ask them :

- i. to guarantee Mr. Aktham Naisse's physical and mental integrity and release him immediately and without condition ;
- ii. to stop the harassment of human rights defenders ;
- iii. to comply with the Declaration of Human Rights Defenders adopted on December 9, 1998 by the UN General Assembly, and notably with Article 1, "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," and to comply completely with the Universal Declaration of Human rights and international instruments on Human rights in Syria.

Addresses :

► Mr Bashar El Assad, President of the Republic, Presidential Palace, Damas ; tel/ Fax : + 963 11 33 23 410

► Mr Mohammed Harba, Minister of Home Affairs, Home Office, Merjeh Circle, Damas ; tel/fax : +963 11 222 34 28

► Mr Nabil Khatib, Minister of Justice, Department of Justice, Al Nasr street, Damas, Tel/fax : +963 11 224 62 50

Paris - Geneva, June 22, 2004

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.

The Observatory was the winner of the 1998 Human Rights Prize of the French Republic.

To contact the Observatory, call the emergency line:

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