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for the Protection  
of Human Rights Defenders



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

## PRESS RELEASE

### **SYRIA: Arrest and incommunicado detention of the President of the Syrian League for Human Rights**

**Paris-Geneva, August 12, 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), and the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) vehemently condemn the arrest and incommunicado detention of prominent Syrian human rights defender Abdel Karim Rihaoui, amid ongoing harsh and general repression in the country.***

On August 11, 2011, Mr. **Abdel Karim Rihaoui**, President of the Syrian League for Human Rights, was arrested by a patrol of the Air Intelligence, at the Havana Cafe in downtown Damascus, where he was meeting with a journalist. His whereabouts have remained unknown since then.

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and the EMHRN firmly condemn the incommunicado detention of Mr. Abdel Karim Rihaoui, and strongly fear that his arbitrary arrest merely aims at sanctioning his human rights activities, and in particular his mobilisation on cases of political prisoners.

*"This arrest provides further evidence of the continued repression of dissenting voices in Syria. We call upon the Syrian authorities to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of Mr. Rihaoui, to disclose his whereabouts and to release him immediately and unconditionally",* FIDH President Souhayr Belhassen said today.

*"We are all the more concerned that Mr. Abdel Karim Rihaoui's arrest takes place amid the current violent repression of peaceful protests in the country, in the framework of which several human rights defenders remain detained today, in conditions of detention that often do not respect their human dignity. Accordingly, we call upon the Syrian authorities to stop the systematic repression of all human rights defenders in the country",* added Eric Sottas, OMCT Secretary General.

Kamel Jendoubi, EMHRN President, said *"we denounce the use of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance of human rights defenders and peaceful activists, which appears to be part of a deliberate strategy aimed at silencing critics on gross human rights abuses"*.

The Observatory and the EMHRN urge the Syrian authorities to guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of people detained and to release Mr. Abdel Karim Rihaoui immediately and unconditionally, in conformity with the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

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