

URGENT APPEAL - THE OBSERVATORY

SYR 002 / 0311 / OBS 033

Sentencing to prison / Arbitrary detention
Judicial harassment

Syria

March 14, 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 sentencing to prison of Mr. **Ali Saleh Al-Abdallah**, writer and member of the National Council of the Damascus Declaration for Democratic National Change (NCDD), a collective pro-democracy movement calling for peaceful democratic reforms in Syria.

According to the information received, on March 13, 2011, Mr. Ali Saleh Al-Abdallah was sentenced by the Second Military Criminal Court in Damascus to three years of imprisonment, for "spreading false and exaggerated news that weaken national sentiments" and "spoiling Syria's relations with another country" under Article 278 of the Criminal Code for a statement made to a news agency from his prison cell criticising human rights violations during Iran's 2009 presidential election. He will serve a sentence of one year and a half due to the credit for the time already served prior to the decision.

The Observatory expresses its deepest concern about the sentencing of Mr. Ali Saleh Al-Abdallah and his ongoing arbitrary detention, which seems to merely aim at sanctioning his human rights activities.

The Observatory further fears for Mr. Ali Saleh Al-Abdallah's physical and psychological integrity and calls upon the Syrian authorities to take prompt action in order to immediately and unconditionally release him, as well as all human rights defenders presently detained in the country. This condemnation illustrates once more the extreme harassment faced by human rights defenders in Syria

Background information

On December 17, 2007, Mr. Ali Saleh Al-Abdallah was arrested and on October 29, 2008, he was sentenced to two years and a half of imprisonment, together with 11 other leaders of the NCDD on charges of "spreading false and exaggerated news that weaken national sentiments" under Article 286 of the Criminal Code .

On June 17, 2010, instead of being released, Mr. Al-Abdallah was transferred into military jurisdiction and new charges were brought against him allegedly for making a press statement from inside the prison regarding Iranian elections in 2009. Since then, he is held in the Central Damascus Prison of Adra.

Actions requested:

Please write to the Syrian authorities, urging them to:

- i. Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Mr. Ali Saleh Al-Abdallah;

- ii. Ensure the immediate and unconditionally release of Mr. Ali Saleh Al-Abdallah since his detention is arbitrary as it only aims at sanctioning his human rights activities;
- iii. Put an end to any acts of harassment, including at the judicial level, against Mr. Ali Saleh Al-Abdallah and more generally 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. 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, March 14, 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

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