

URGENT APPEAL - THE OBSERVATORY

SYR 003 / 0311 / OBS 037
Obstacle to freedom of assembly /
Arbitrary arrest / Assault
Syria
March 16, 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 assault and arrest of dozens of family members of human rights activists and prisoners of conscience who had gathered before the Ministry of Interior to call for the release of their relatives and all prisoners of conscience in Syria.

According to the information received, on March 16, 2011, dozens of family members of prisoners of conscience and human rights activists gathered peacefully at noon to call for the release of all prisoners of conscience in Syria as well as to express disappointment that a significant number of prisoners of conscience were not covered by the March 8, 2011 amnesty adopted to mark the Baath Revolution Day.

There, they were “welcomed” by State security officers who beat them up and arrested some of them, in particular **Omar Al-Labwani, Yassin Al-Labwani, Riba Al-Labwani, Laila Al-Labwani, Ammar Al-Labwani, Siba Hassan, Hussein Labwani, Amer Dawood, Hanibal Awad, Sereen Khouri, Nahid Badawieh, Naret Abdul Karim, Mahmoud Ghawrani, Badr Al-Shallash, Kamal Cheikho¹, Osama Nassar, Maimouna Alammari, Mohammad Adib Matar, Saad and Bisher Saeed, Ghaffar Muhammad, Dana Al-Jawabra, Wafa Al-Lahham, Tayeb Tezini, Mohammad Darwish, Kaka Dawood, Nabil Shurbaji, Merveen Awsi, Ghaffar Hikmat Muhammad, Abdul Rahman Khitou, Rayan Suleyman, Daya Al-Din Daghmouh, Nasredin Ahmou, Hassiba Abderrahman, Abd Temmo** as well as **Mazen Darwish**, Director of the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM) and **Suhair Al-Attassi**, President of the Attassi Forum, a pro-democracy discussion group.

As of issuing this urgent appeal, all those persons remained detained in an unknown location.

Moreover, the Observatory recalls that a group of around 12 prisoners of conscience detained in the Damascus central prison of Adra went on a hunger strike on March 7, 2011 to demand the end of political trials and detentions, as well as democratic reforms in the country. This group notably included human rights defenders Messrs. **Anwar Al Bunni**, a lawyer and founding member of the Syrian Human Rights Association, **Habib Saleh**, founder of the Tartus branch of the National Dialogue Forum, **Ali Al-Abdallah**, member of the National Council of the Damascus Declaration for Democratic National Change (NCDD), **Kamal Labwani** member of the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Liberties and Human Rights in Syria (CDF).

These acts illustrate once more the extreme harassment faced by human rights defenders in Syria and the refusal of the regime to open any dialogue with any dissenting voices. The Observatory expresses its deepest concern about the assault and arrest of these peaceful demonstrators, which seem to merely aim at sanctioning their human rights activities, and

¹ Kamal Cheikho, a member of the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Liberties and Human Rights in Syria (CDF), was released on bail on March, 13, 2011. He is still facing charges.

particularly fears for their physical and psychological integrity. The Observatory therefore calls upon the Syrian authorities to take prompt action in order to immediately and unconditionally release them, as well as all human rights defenders currently detained in the country.

Actions requested:

Please write to the Syrian authorities, urging them to:

- i. Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of all above-mentioned peaceful demonstrators and human rights defenders;
- ii. Ensure their immediate and unconditionally release since their detention is arbitrary as it only aims at sanctioning their human rights activities;
- iii. Put an end to any acts of harassment, including at the judicial level, 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 5 (a), which states that “for the purpose of promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, at the national and international levels: to meet or assemble peacefully”;
 - 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 16, 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