

EGYPT: Raid on the premises of Radio Horytna and arrest of its Chief Editor Ahmed Samih

Paris – Geneva, 9 April 2015 - The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) and the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), strongly condemn the raid on the premises of Radio Horytna and the arrest of Mr **Ahmed Samih**, Director of the Andalus Institute for Tolerance and Anti-Violence Studies (AITAS) and Chief Editor of the radio. AITAS is a member organisation of EMHRN, working to promote a culture of tolerance, anti-violence and respect for human rights in the MENA region. Radio Horytna is an online radio program established in 2007 at the initiative of AITAS to reach youth audience. EMHRN and the Observatory consider that this constitutes a blatant violation of the right to freedom of expression and is part of a wider pattern of persecution and intimidation against human rights defenders in Egypt.

On Saturday 4 April, around ten members of the Egyptian police force raided the headquarters of Radio Horytna in Cairo. Without an arrest or a search warrant, the police searched the premises, interrogated the staff, and confiscated three computers and one microphone. One of the key questions raised concerned the news content and their political affiliations, although the key focus of the radio is to broadcast human rights-related news.

According to the information received, Mr Ahmed Samih was detained and brought to Sayeda Zeinab police station, where he was subjected to a four-hour interrogation until 3am, followed by a six hour interrogation the following day. He was detained for more than 24 hours and released on bail of LE 5,000 (around 600 euros) on the evening of Sunday 5 April. Mr Ahmed Samih was accused of violating the provisions of Law No. 82 of 2002 (Law on the Protection of Intellectual Property) and law No. 10 of 2003 (Telecommunication Regulation Law) under the following charges:

- 1- Establishing and running communication networks and providing communication services without a licence;
- 2- Broadcasting audio and visual materials without a licence;
- 3- Displaying audio and visual materials in a public place without permission from the Ministry of Culture;
- 4- Using protected audio and visual materials without written permission (this is the intellectual property right related charge);
- 5- Running an institution (Radio Horytna) without a licence.

However, under Egyptian law, a licence for establishing online radio stations or broadcasting materials on the Internet is not required.

EMHRN and the Observatory urge the Egyptian authorities to immediately stop their ongoing judicial harassment and repression against human rights defenders and independent human rights organisations aimed at closing remaining spaces for freedom of assembly, expression and association in Egypt. Egyptian authorities should immediately and unconditionally release all those detained solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression, online and offline.

EMHRN and the Observatory call on the Egyptian authorities to immediately drop all charges against Mr Ahmed Samih, return all confiscated material and allow Radio Horytna to continue its broadcasting activities without further obstruction or harassment.