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of Human Rights Defenders



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

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

SYRIA: Concern for Human Rights Lawyer Mustafa Osso and other Syrian lawyers

Copenhagen, Geneva, Paris, November 23, 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) fear for the safety and security of human rights lawyer Mustafa Osso, who is subjected to harassment by the security police after requesting a travel permit, as well as other harassed human rights lawyers.*

In the context of the unprecedented movement of protest that confronts the Syrian regime since mid-March 2011, Syrian human rights defenders continue to face systematic repression.

On November 20, 2011, Mr. **Mustafa Osso**, a lawyer and President of the Kurdish Organization for Defending Human Rights and Public Freedoms (DAD), was arrested by the security police in Al-Hassakeh after he appeared before its “passports and travel” section to request a permit to travel. He was brought before the Al-Hassakeh branch of the security police for questioning and was released several hours later. The security police ordered him to appear within three days before the security police in Damascus.

“It is unacceptable that today, human rights defenders continue to face travel restrictions in retaliation for their human rights activities”, said OMCT Secretary General Gerald Staberock. “The Observatory listed more than one hundred cases in 2010-2011”.

Previously, Mr. Osso had faced other acts of harassment, notably disciplinary measures, for publicly condemning the violations committed by the security services and the pro-regime militias. For instance, on August 1, 2011, Mr. Osso was interrogated by the Al-Hassakeh branch of the Syrian Bar Association, of which he is a member, following a statement he made in the local media, under the pretext that it would “undermine the legitimacy of the Syrian State”. “Several lawyers are also facing disciplinary harassment due to the repressive stance adopted by the Syrian Bar Association”. Kamel Jendoubi, EMHRN President, says. “It recently included Mr. **Faisal Badr**, Spokesperson for the group of lawyers “Syrian Lawyers for Freedom”, and Mr. **Fadel Salim**, Board Member of the Human Rights Organisation in Syria “MAF”.

Several human rights defenders, notably lawyers, are facing criminal charges. For instance, Mr. **Mohammed Suleiman Khalil**, DAD Secretary General, is standing trial before the Court of First Instance in Ras Al-Ein, Al-Hassakeh, as well as lawyer **Suleiman Mohammed Ismail**, a member of the Board of Directors of the Kurdish Committee for Human Rights in Syria (Al-Rasid), and lawyers **Ali Abdullah Colo**, **Abdul-Wahab Jamil Mohamed**, **Abdul-Majid Ibrahim Elew**, **Ismail Mahmoud Aliko**, **Akram Mohyi Eddine Mamo**, and **Mohammed Issa Mohammed Ali Ahmed**, for “demonstrating without a permit”, “inciting demonstrations”, “showing contempt, libel, and “slander against the entity of the state and its president” pursuant to Articles 335 and 336 of the Criminal Code. Their trial is due to resume on November 30, 2011.

“We deplore the constant harassment of Syrian human rights defenders for merely defending human rights. It blatantly violates the commitments made on several occasions by the regime to respond to the protest movement”, FIDH President Souhayr Belhassen said.

The Observatory and the EMHRN urge the Syrian authorities to put an end to all acts of harassment against human rights defenders, to immediately and unconditionally release all persons arbitrarily detained and to conform in all circumstances with the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (1998) as well as international human rights instruments, which bind the Syrian authorities.

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