



Date : Thursday 16 February 2012

Concern for 14 human rights defenders arrested in SCM's offices

Copenhagen, Geneva, Paris, February 16, 2012. 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 14 human rights defenders who were arrested this afternoon in the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM)'s offices.

<http://www.fidh.org/Concern-for-14-human-rights>

FIDH - Worldwide Human Rights Movement

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 arrest, detention and acts of torture and ill-treatment.

The Observatory and EMHRN have been informed about the arbitrary arrest of Mr. **Mazen Darwich**, SCM Director, as well as his wife, Ms. **Yara Badr**, blogger Ms. **Razan Ghazawi**, as well as SCM staff members, journalists or human rights defenders Mr. **Hussayn Gharir**, Mr. **Hani Zitani**, Ms. **Sana' Zitani**, Ms. **Rita Dayoub**, Mr. **Jawan Farso**, Ms. **Hanadeh Zahlout**, Mr. **Bassam al-Ahmed**, Ms. **Mayada Khalil**, Ms. **Maha El-Seblani**, Mr. **Abdelrahman Alhamade** and Mr. **Mohammed Al Hamade**.

According to information received, on February 16, 2012, at 2 pm, a security armed patrol stormed into SCM's offices in down-town Damascus in Sabea Bahrat and arrested all those who were present in the offices. After shutting down the offices, the armed patrol blindfolded the human rights defenders and took them to an unknown destination. At the time of publication, it was not known which security group arrested them nor where the human rights defenders were taken to.

The Observatory and the EMHRN are deeply concerned by their arrest and fear for their physical and psychological integrity, particularly in the current context as torture and ill-treatment are common practice during detention in Syria. The Observatory and the EMHRN call upon the Syrian authorities to take prompt action in order to disclose their fate and whereabouts and release them immediately as they believe that their arrest is directly related to their human rights activities.

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.