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FREEDOM FOR KURDISH LINGUIST DARWESH XALIB AND FOR ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS IN SYRIA

Dedicated to my brother Kone Resh and Kurds all prisoners in Syria



Yesterday the President of the Republic Mr Nicolas Sarkozy had a telephone conversation today with Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, to discuss international efforts to consolidate the current ceasefire in Gaza. But Mr. President, did not take into consideration the statement of democratic organizations on Human Rights in Syria. While the Syrian authorities continue to harass and persecute political activists and defenders of human rights. Torture and ill-treatment is practiced with impunity. The trials for prisoners of conscience ignore the international standards of fairness. Among all these violations, we can not make an exhaustive list here as they are numerous, serious violations of freedom of opinion and expression are systematic. Arrests frequently afflict all dissenting voices especially intellectuals and writers and journalists Kurds The Kurdish linguist, Mr Derwesh Xalib was taken from home by the Syrian security force in Qamishli (South West Kurdistan) (Syria) last Tuesday 13th Jan 09 and is still in detention. The security forces have again

raided his home last Thursday 15th Jan 09 and confiscated all his books, writings and transcripts.

Mr Derwesh Xalib is 59 years old, he is a linguist and computer engineer, he has five children and has dedicated his live to serve the Kurdish language. He has run a lot of Kurdish language courses during the last few years, even though the kurdish language is forbidden in Syria. He is not related to any political parties. He has established the Committee for Learning the Kurdish Language, which has helped hundreds of young Kurdish men and women to learn the Kurdish language.



Mr Derwesh Xalib at graduation learning in Kurdish

Mr Derwesh Xalib has been a member of the Kurdish PEN Centre for years and has great contribution to the cause of the Kurdish language.

Amnesty International has high on Wednesday October 29 against the conviction of twelve activists democracy two and a half years in prison by a Syrian penal tribunal.

The militants, all members of the Damascus Declaration for National Democratic Change (DDDNC) Syrian opposition group, were convicted, following an unfair trial, weakening nationalist sentiment and disseminating false or exaggerated news that could affect the morale of the country. Amnesty International considers that the twelve activists are prisoners of conscience, detained solely for having called for democratic reforms and respect human rights. The organization will continue its campaign for their release.

As we have already written, in Syria, Kurdish detainees are routinely

accused of wanting to link a part of Syrian territory to a future independent state of Kurdistan.

The fate of our compatriots is an inseparable element of all the peoples of Kurdistan. We know that the four Kurds were arrested in March 2006 after participating in a demonstration in Afrine, in the governorate of Aleppo (north) on the eve of the Kurdish festival of Newroz, and then accused of attacking a patrol Security. ONDH and Syrian League for the Defense of Human Rights (LSDDH) have called for the "removal" of this exceptional court whose judgments are final.

The LSDDH asked the Syrian government to "take urgent measures to ensure civil and political rights of the accused" and "close the file of political prisoners by releasing all", in a statement.

The truth is that the world public knows the fate of the Kurds in Kurdistan South East since 16 March 2004, when Syrian security forces to Qamishlo, in Aleppo and Haseke in the north, and Damascus Order * hundreds of men, including young people as young as fourteen, were arrested at their homes. Their families remain without news of them. According to Amnesty International, it is feared that those who died were victims of deliberate killings and excessive use of force.

"It is likely that the victims and those arrested were targeted because of their Kurdish origin, said Amnesty International. The prisoners may be subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, especially as their whereabouts remain unknown.

"Amnesty International calls for independent and impartial investigation be conducted into the killings and that those responsible are brought to justice in accordance with international standards for fair trial.

"The Syrian authorities must inform the people involved in the place where prisoners are detained to prevent them from becoming victims of abuse or further violence erupting," urged the organization of human rights .

According to the report by Amnesty International,

Kurds continued to suffer from discrimination based on their identity, including restrictions on the use of their language and culture. Tens of thousands of Kurds in Syria were de facto stateless and therefore do not benefit fully from their economic and social rights which our member Mr. Derwesh Xalib is a victim of colonialism regime Bashar El-Assad

- According to information received in March 2008 the Kurdish artist Sheerzad Amr Salah was arrested and mistreated in the local security services in Aleppo, after attending a concert.

- Eight Kurds were reportedly arrested on April 5, then held for ten days at the premises of the Political Security in Damascus. They alleged, it seems, wear bracelets in the colors of the Kurdish flag.

Arbitrary arrests and detentions Political Prisoners

About 1 500 people were arrested for political reasons, some were considered prisoners of conscience. Hundreds of others arrested in previous years, were detained. The majority of the roughly 170 people convicted in the year after grossly unfair trials before the Supreme Court of State security or to criminal courts and military, it seems, militant Islamists.

- On 11 March, the Supreme Court of State Security has convicted 24 men from the area of Qatana, near Damascus, to belong "to a group in order to change the economic structure and social the State "and" weaken national sentiment ". These men were convicted solely on the basis of "confessions" that they had been extracted under torture. They were sentenced to between four and twelve years imprisonment. Arrested between May and November 2004, they had been held incommunicado for over a year at the premises of the Palestine Branch, a branch of military service in Damascus, where torture and ill-treatment are systematically inflicted on inmates. The Supreme Court of State Security has ordered no investigation into allegations of torture made by these men.

- On 10 May, a criminal court recognized Kamal al-Labwani guilty of "conspiracy or communicating with a foreign country to attack Syria" and sentenced to twelve years' imprisonment. The charge was related to a visit by the man in Europe and the USA in 2005. During his stay, he met with organizations of human rights and government officials and called for peaceful democratic reform in Syria. Kamal al-Labwani had already spent three years in prison for participating in the reform movement of non-violent "Damascus Spring" in 2000 and 2001.

- On 13 May, a criminal court acknowledged Michel Kilo and Mahmoud Issa guilty of "attack the nationalist sentiments" and sentenced to three years' imprisonment. They were part of a group of 10 signatories of the "Beirut-Damascus Declaration" adopted in May 2006, a text signed by 300 Syrians and Lebanese advocated normalization of relations between the two countries.

- On the forty people arrested for their participation, on 1 December, at a meeting of the National Council of the Damascus Declaration for National Democratic Change, a body comprising several organizations banned, seven were still being held incommunicado at the end of the year.

Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

We learned in February that the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention [UN] had declared in May 2006 that Riad Drar al-Hamood was detained arbitrarily, because his trial did not meet international standards of fairness and condemnation sanctioned only exercise the right to freedom of expression. Riad Drar al-Hamood was convicted by the Supreme Court of State Security in April 2006, membership in a "secret society" and "spreading false news" and "inciting sectarian strife factions" and sentenced to five years' imprisonment. These charges were related to a speech at the funeral of Sheikh Muhammad Ma'shuq al-Khiznawi, a Kurdish cleric, who was killed after being abducted. In June, the Working Group concluded qu'Ayman Ardenli, imprisoned for three years without charge, had been detained arbitrarily, his imprisonment is "devoid of any legal justification." He also suggested that Muhammad Zammar was detained for nearly five years without charge before being sentenced on 11 February by the Supreme Court of State Security to twelve years imprisonment, detention was arbitrary, because its trial did not meet international standards of fairness (see below).

Freedom of expression

Freedom of expression remained under severe restrictions.

- On 17 June, Maher Isber Ibrahim, Tareq al-Ghorani, Hussam Ali Mulhim, Diab Siriyeh, Omar Ali al-Abdullah, Allam Fakhour and Ayham Saqr, who were brought before the Supreme Court of State Security, were convicted of "have taken steps or make a written or oral statement that could put the state in danger or harm to its relations with a foreign country or exposure to hostile action." They were arrested for having participated in the creation of a panel of young people and published articles on the Internet in favor of democracy. Maher Isber Ibrahim and Tareq al-Ghorani were also convicted of "disseminating false information" and sentenced to seven years' imprisonment. Their five co-defendants were sentenced to five years imprisonment. Arrested in early 2006 by agents of the Intelligence Service of the Air Force, they were held incommunicado until November 2006. At their trial, they returned on their "confessions" in detention, saying that they had been obtained under torture and duress. The Supreme Court of State Security, however, has ordered no

investigation and identified the "confessions" as evidence.

- On 31 December, Faeq al-Mir, leader of the People's Democratic Party, was convicted by a criminal court of "spreading false information affecting the nation." He was, it seems to have telephoned a Lebanese politician to offer his condolences following the assassination of a Lebanese minister. He was sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment.

- On 7 June, members of the Military Intelligence Service have arrested Kareem Arabji, apparently because he hosted the site www.akhawia.net, a youth forum on the Internet. The man was still held incommunicado at the end of the year.

Torture and ill-treatment

As in previous years, prisoners were tortured and mistreated, five people died in custody, apparently as a result of such abuse. The authorities have taken no steps to investigate allegations of torture.

- Aref Dalilah, sixty-four years, was held in solitary confinement in a small cell at Adra prison, where he was serving a sentence of ten years imprisonment for participating in the "Damascus Spring". He suffered from diabetes and hypertension, as well as the aftermath of a stroke, but was deprived of medical care required.

- The body of Abd al Moez Salem was returned to his family in Areeha July 4. The funeral took place in the presence of officers of military intelligence who have not allowed the relatives of the man to see the body or to prepare it for burial. Abd al Moez Salem had believed he was detained incommunicado for almost two years, particularly in the offices of the Palestine Branch.

- Aref Hannoush, sixteen years, was part of a group of nine young people were tortured and mistreated during their detention in Damascus in August. These young people have complained of being crammed into cells in degrading conditions, having been deprived of sleep and access to toilets. They were also beaten and subjected to particularly Dulaba (the tire), an ordeal in which the victim is suspended in a tire and beaten.

Violence and discrimination against women

We learned in January that the Minister of Social Affairs and Labor banned the Syrian Women's Association, which existed since 1948. In February, the minister dissolved the Organization of social initiative, another group of women's rights. He refused in September to allow five non-governmental

organizations, including the Organization to assist women and victims of domestic violence.

In February, the grand mufti of Syria, Sheikh Ahmed Badreddin Hassoun, condemned the "honor" crimes and said that the presence of four witnesses was necessary to prove adultery. He added that he had asked the Minister of Justice to appoint a commission to amend the legislation relating to "honor" crimes.

In June, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women [UN] has recommended to the Syrian authorities several measures. He asked the authorities to amend or repeal discriminatory laws, including certain provisions of the Personal Status Code, the Penal Code and the Nationality Law, and to ensure that marital rape is a crime and erected that the perpetrators of "honor" crimes are not exempt from punishment or do not have a remission of sentence. He also asked the authorities to set up shelters and services for women victims of violence, and enable organizations of women's rights and human rights to operate independently of government.

Human rights defenders

Several organizations of human rights continued their unauthorized activities. Their members remained at risk of being arrested, harassed and banned from traveling abroad.

- On 24 April, Anwar al-Bunni, a lawyer and director of the Syrian Center for Studies and Legal Research, was convicted by a criminal court of "spreading false information liable to harm the nation." He was sentenced to five years' imprisonment. This charge was related to a statement made in April 2006 about the death in custody of Muhammad Shaher Hays, apparently as a result of ill-treatment or torture. Anwar al-Bunni is considered a prisoner of conscience.

Prison guards have beaten on 25 January.

- On 1 November, the authorities have prevented Muhannad al-Hasani, Khalil Maatouq, Mustafa Oso, Radif Mustafa and Hasan Masho, lawyers specialized in human rights to visit Egypt to attend a workshop organized by the International Federation Human Rights (FIDH) and the Institute for Studies on Human Rights in Cairo.

Death Penalty

The death penalty was still applied for a range of crimes. At least seven people were executed, it appears in public. They had been sentenced after unfair trials that took place before a military tribunal of exception. The defendants

brought before this court does not have a lawyer and have no right to appeal decisions.

• On 25 October, five prisoners - Radwan Hassan Abd al-Qadr Muhammad Khalif al Kheiro Fares, Abd al Faisal Abd al Hai Hai, Saleh Youssef Mahmoud and Ahmed Hassan Khallouf - were hanged in public in Aleppo. The last two, which had not more than eighteen years at the time of their execution, were probably juvenile offenders. According to Syrian media, the anguished had committed "several murders and armed robberies and had terrorized innocent citizens."

Enforced

The authorities had still not provided information on the fate of some 17 000 people - mostly Islamists - victims of enforced disappearances after arrest in the late 1970s and early 1980s, nor that of Hundreds of Lebanese and Palestinians detained in Syria or abducted from Lebanon by Syrian forces or Lebanese and Palestinian militias.

Therefore, Mr President, the French presidency of the European Union and the establishment of the Union for the Mediterranean to France a unique opportunity to play a leading role for the promotion of human rights in region. During your speech, you are committed to "defend human rights wherever they are ignored or threatened." In Syria, the human rights situation is extremely worrying.

In this country, those who are fighting peacefully for the recognition of their fundamental freedoms need your support.

For all these reasons, we ask you to intervene with President Bashar al-Assad to the following steps be taken:

1 / The immediate and unconditional release Mr. Derwesh Xalib was a member of the Kurdish PEN Center for years and has a great contribution to the cause of the Kurdish language. of Anwar al Bounni, Michel Kilo and Mahmoud Issa, and all prisoners of conscience,

2 / The protection of all detainees against torture and ill-treatment,

3 / The cessation of all forms of harassment and persecution of defenders of human rights,

4 / Compliance by Syria of its international commitments to human rights.

Dr Ali KILIC, Dijon, on 23-01-2009

