



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

Syria: Amnesty must be completed and accompanied by immediate End to Killings

Copenhagen – 3 June 2011. While the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) welcomes the Legislative Decree No. 61 of May 30 granting “general amnesty for crimes committed before 31 May 2011”, it reiterates its deepest concern as for the fate of hundreds of prisoners of conscience who remain in detention as well as for persistent threats on human rights activists and peaceful protestors in the country.

“The Syrian authorities must immediately release all prisoners of conscience including all persons arbitrarily detained due to their participation in peaceful demonstrations”, EMHRN executive director Marc Schade Poulsen said today *“It must also halt the use of lethal force and torture against demonstrators and the Syrian citizens”*.

The EMHRN warmly welcomes the liberation of human rights lawyer Mohannad Al Hassani, president of the Human Rights Organization in Syria “Sawassyah” and lawyer Ismail Abdi (board member of EMHRN member organization CDF), as well as several prominent pro-Democracy activists including Mahmoud Issa, a leader of the Communist Labor party and Mechaal Tammo, member of the political bureau of the Kurdish Future party. On 23 May, the Syrian authorities has released human rights lawyer Anouar Al Bunni after he finished his term.

The Amnesty only pardons half penalties for felonies, which will leave a number of political detainees in prison. This situation includes the cases of well known rights activists, including physician Kamal Al Labwani, the journalist Ali Abdallah, as well as the young female blogger Tal Al Malouhi. The EMHRN also stresses that the decree did not cover cases of persons arrested in relation to the movement of protest such as pro-democracy activists Najati Tayara or human rights lawyer Abdallah Khalil.

The EMHRN recalls that most human rights activists in the country are compelled to hide because of threats from state security apparatus, which systematically raid their houses, sometimes arresting members of their family to force activists to surrender. Wael Hamada, the husband of human rights lawyer Razan Zaitouneh, and his brother Abdulrahman are held incommunicado since their arrest respectively on 12 May and 30 April. The EMHRN fears they may be tortured.

The Amnesty also applies to members of Muslim Brotherhood sentenced on the basis of law 1980/49. However the EMHRN reminds that this law, which punishes with death penalty members of the Muslim Brotherhood, remains in force. It also regrets that the Amnesty decree excludes members of the Brotherhood in exile.

The EMHRN considers that while the amnesty is a positive measure as such, it comes late as a reaction to the growing movement of peaceful protest in the country and is insufficient.

The EMHRN urges the Syrian authorities to ensure that:

- the shooting of peaceful protestors stops immediately;
- army units are withdrawn from the cities immediately;
- the amnesty includes all political detainees without exception;
- the amnesty is accompanied by the end of arbitrary detentions, ill treatments and acts of torture

The EMHRN urges the Syrian authorities to conduct genuine reforms that allow for the respect of freedom of expression, freedom of association and freedom of assembly, and recalls that those who are responsible of the grave, widespread, and systemic human rights violations in Syria should be brought before independent and impartial jurisdictions.

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