



Syria

15 April 2011

The authorities should put an immediate end to the smearing campaign against a human rights defender in exile

Copenhagen-Geneva-Paris, 15 April 2011 - The EMHRN and the Observatory for the protection of human rights defenders (a joint program of the International Federation for Human Rights - FIDH and the World Organisation Against Torture - OMCT) express their deep concern over the smearing campaign conducted by State-controlled media against a Syrian human rights defender.

In April 2011, the private TV channel Aldunia, property of Syrian businessman Rami Makhlouf, a close relative of President Bashar Al-Asad [1], has repeatedly broadcasted a report stating that key figures of the pro-democracy opposition in exile have received financial support from the Israeli intelligence Mossad.

The Aldunia report [2] notably accuses human rights defender Radwan Ziadeh, Director of the Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies (an EMHRN and FIDH member organisation) to have supposedly benefited from financial support from Israeli intelligence services (Mossad). The DCHRS is an independent human rights research center based in Damascus. Since its creation in 2005, it has been extensively advocating into international fora to shed light on Syria's human rights records.

In parallel, the EMHRN and the Observatory have been informed that Mr. **Radwan Ziadeh**, currently established in the USA, has received on several occasions explicit threats directed against his family still based in Syria, notably by e-mail.

In the context of the unprecedented movement of protest that confronts the Syrian regime since mid-March 2011, the EMHRN and the Observatory express their deep concern as the authorities systematically use State controlled media to disseminate pro-regime propaganda and undermine the credibility of human rights defenders, pro-democracy activists and peaceful protesters, while restricting independent journalists' access to areas where demonstrations have taken place.

The EMHRN and the Observatory call upon the Syrian authorities:

- to ensure that an end be put to all forms of harassment, intimidation, threats, against human rights defender Radwan Ziadeh and his relatives;
- to order immediate, thorough, effective and impartial investigations into the threats against Mr. Ziadeh's relatives, the result of which must be made public, in order to identify all those responsible, bring them before a civil competent and impartial tribunal and apply to them the penal sanctions provided by the law;

- to conform in all circumstances with international human rights standards and instruments ratified by Syria, and with the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, in particular its Articles 5 (a) and 6 as well as its Article 12.2, which provides that "the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration".
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[1] See <http://addounia.tv/web/main.php>.

[2] See: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BsQF...>

<http://www.fidh.org/The-authorities-should-put-an-immediate-end-to>