

# THE OBSERVATORY

## for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

### L'OBSERVATOIRE

pour la Protection des Défenseurs des Droits de  
l'Homme

### EL OBSERVATORIO

para la Protección  
de los Defensores de Derechos Humanos

#### URGENT APPEAL - THE OBSERVATORY

**SYR 001 / 0209 / OBS 027**

Obstacles to the freedom of movement /  
Harassment

**Syrian Arab Republic**

February 17, 2009

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), requests your urgent intervention on the following situation in the **Syrian Arab Republic**.

#### **Brief description of the situation:**

The Observatory has been informed by reliable sources about obstacles to the freedom of movement of lawyer Ms. **Jameela Sadeq**, Mr. **Ibraheem Issa** and writer Mr. **Muhammad Badee Dakelbab**, respectively Secretary and members of the National Organisation For Human Rights in Syria (NOHR-S).

According to the information received, on January 4, 2009, Ms. Jameela Sadeq was prevented from travelling to Cairo, Egypt, to participate in trainings on fair trial pursuant to an order issued by the State Security Services on November 10, 2008. Similarly, on January 31, 2009, Mr. Ibraheem Issa was prevented from travelling to Jordan to attend a seminar about minorities' rights pursuant to order issued by political security branch on December 3, 2008. Earlier, on November 25, 2008, Mr. Muhammad Badee Dakelbab had been prevented from travelling to Turkey to attend human rights related activities. On the same day, his passport was confiscated by the Military Security Services.

Those attacks on freedom of movement are common practices in Syria. In 2008, more than 400 travel bans would have been issued by the authorities, including more than 100 against human rights defenders, preventing them from leaving Syria to attend workshops and human rights seminar abroad.

Travel ban is an additional tool to silence Syrian human rights defenders and aims at restricting the right to travel based on the Emergency Law since the end of the 1960s. Since 2006, it has become a systematic policy by Syrian authorities that reached its climax in September 2008, when security agencies drafted extensive lists, which included individuals who had participated in general political and human rights activity.

The Observatory denounces these obstacles to the freedom of movement imposed on Ms. Jameela Sadeq, Mr. Ibraheem Issa and Mr. Muhammad Badee Dakelbab, and strongly condemns harassment faced by human rights defenders in Syria, which only aims at muzzling their freedom of expression and sanctioning their human rights activities.

The Observatory further recalls that these restrictions on the freedom of movement violate Article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Syria has ratified, as well as the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 9, 1998, in particular its Article 5 (c), which states that "for the purpose of promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, at national and international levels (...) to communicate with non-governmental or intergovernmental organizations", and Article 6 (b) regarding the right "to freely publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and knowledge on all human rights and fundamental freedoms".

## **Actions requested:**

Please write to the Syrian authorities, urging them to:

- i. Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Ms. Jameela Sadeq, Mr. Ibraheem Issa, and Mr. Muhammad Badee Dakelbab;
- ii. Put an end to any obstacle to their freedom of movement as well as of all human rights defenders in Syria;
- iii. Ensure in all circumstances that Syrian human rights defenders are able to carry out their work without unjustified hindrances;
- iv. Put an end to the harassment against Ms. Jameela Sadeq, Mr. Ibraheem Issa, and Mr. Muhammad Badee Dakelbab as well as against all human rights defenders in the Syrian Arab Republic;
- v. Conform with the provisions of the UN Declaration of Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 9, 1998, especially its Article 1, which states that “everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms at national and international levels”, and above-mentioned Article 5 (c), 6 (b) and 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 in the present Declaration”;
- vi. Ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by the Syrian Arabic Republic.

## **Addresses:**

- President, H.E. Bashar al-Assad, Presidential Palace, al Rashid Street, Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic, Fax: +963 11 332 3410
- Minister of Defence, H.E. General Hassan Ali Turkmani, Ministry of Defence, Omayyad Square, Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic, Fax: +963 11 223 7842
- Minister of Justice, H.E. Muhammad al-Ghafari, Ministry of Justice, Al-Nasr Street, Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic, Fax: +963 11 666 2460
- Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Wallid Mu'allim, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, al-Rashid Street, Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic, Fax: +963 11 332 7620
- Ambassador Faysal Khabbaz Hamoui, Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations in Geneva, 72 rue de Lausanne, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland, Fax: +41 22 738 42 75, Email: [mission.syria@ties.itu.int](mailto:mission.syria@ties.itu.int)
- Embassy of the Syrian Arab Republic in Brussels, 3 avenue F.D. Roosevelt, 1050 Brussels, Belgium, Tel: +32 2 554 19 22; Fax: + 32 264 640 18. Email: [ambsyrie@skynet.be](mailto:ambsyrie@skynet.be)

Please also write to the diplomatic mission or embassy of the Syrian Arabic Republic in your respective country.

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Paris-Geneva, February 17, 2009

Kindly inform us of any action undertaken quoting the code of this appeal in your reply.

The Observatory, a FIDH and OMCT venture, is dedicated to the protection of Human Rights Defenders and aims to offer them concrete support in their time of need. The Observatory was the winner of the 1998 Human Rights Prize of the French Republic.

To contact the Observatory, call the emergency line:

E-mail: [Appeals@fidh-omct.org](mailto:Appeals@fidh-omct.org)

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## **FIDH**

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75 011 Paris, France

## **OMCT**

World Organisation Against Torture  
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