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<http://www.rsf.org/syria-mazen-darwish-to-be-tried-by-09-08-2012,43193.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Syria

Denial of justice

Mazen Darwish to be tried by special military court

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[In Arabic \(بالعربية\)](#)

Syria's airforce intelligence service refused to comply with a judge's request to produce **Mazen Darwish**, the head of the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM), in court on 6 August, at a hearing for those arrested during a raid on the centre's Damascus headquarters on 16 February.

In a letter to the court, the airforce intelligence service simply said that the SCM had been operating without permission.

Darwish, of whom there has been no news since his arrest, will therefore be tried by a special military court that holds its hearings behind closed doors at military police headquarters in the northeastern Damascus district of Qabon. It does not allow defendants to be represented by a lawyer, its proceedings are completely secret and its sentences are carried out immediately.

The judge presiding the 6 August hearing also rejected requests by lawyers to defend the eight other defendants - **Yara Badr, Razan Ghazzawi, Mayada Khalil, Sana Zetani, Hussein Gharir, Hani Zetani, Mansour Al-Omari** and **Abdel Rahman Hamada** - and adjourned the case until 29 August.

The last four - Hussein Gharir, Hani Zetani, Mansour Al-Omari and Abdel Rahman Hamada - are, like Darwish, being held incommunicado. Reporters Without Borders calls on the Syrian authorities to reveal where they are being held.

"Arbitrary arrests and holding political prisoners incommunicado constitute blatant violations of international law and are tantamount to enforced disappearances," Reporters Without Borders said.

"The courts are no longer taking the trouble to maintain even a facade of legality. Darwish, Gharir, Zetani, Al-Omari and Hamada must be freed together with all the other professional and citizen journalists arrested since the start of the conflict."

In an interview for the Syria-politic.com news website, lawyer and human rights activist Michel Shammas has expressed deep concern about the fate of Darwish and the other people who worked with the SCM. He also pointed out that it is still not known what charges they are facing.

Reporters Without Borders has meanwhile also learned that the artist and activist **Kafah Ali Dib** and the activist **Rami Al-Hanawi** were arrested yesterday in the Damascus suburb of Sahnayia by members of "popular committees" working for the security services. Dib is now reportedly being held at the security department's "Palestine" section.

The filmmaker **Bassam Mohieddine Hossein** was murdered near his home in Jdayet Artooz, a southwestern district of the capital, on 5 August. Born in the coastal city of Tartus in 1955, he had been working for the State Cinema Agency since 1984.

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