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Middle East/North Africa - Syria

Still in prison

Verdict postponed again in trial of 2012 RWB Prize winner Mazen Darwish

7 November 2014

As the 2014 Reporters Without Borders - TV5Monde Prize for Press Freedom was being presented at a ceremony in Strasbourg two days ago, a Damascus court again postponed its verdict in the case of the Syrian jailed journalist and activist Mazen Darwish, the recipient of the 2012 award.

Reporters Without Borders deplores the umpteenth adjournment by the court, which had been due to give its verdict on 5 November in the trial of **Darwish** and two of his colleagues.

The [trial](#) of Darwish, the head of the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression, has been adjourned four times since March this year. He was [arrested](#), together with Hani Al-Zaiyati and Hussein Gurier and 12 other staff members, in February 2012 during a raid on the centre's Damascus office by members of Syrian air force intelligence. The three human rights campaigners were charged under section 8 of the 2012 anti-terrorism law with "publicizing terrorist acts" and held in Damascus prisons.

"These adjournments illustrate the dire state of freedom of information in Syria," said Virginie Dangles, deputy programme director of Reporters Without Borders. *"The case of Mazen Darwish is symbolic of the many journalists, netizens and activists still held in Syrian jails merely for lawfully doing their job."*

RWB and 78 other organizations [called](#) for the immediate and unconditional release of Darwish and his colleagues in a joint appeal to the Syrian authorities on 5 September.

On 9 October, the author Salman Rushdie, winner of the 2014 PEN Pinter Prize, announced that he would [share](#) the award with Darwish.

Some 20 civil society activists, human rights campaigners, journalists and aid workers are still arbitrarily held in detention in Syria, months after a [general amnesty](#) was declared in June.

Syria remains one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists. It is ranked 177th of 180 countries in the 2014 [World Press Freedom index](#) compiled by Reporters Without Borders.

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