

# 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

**LBN 001 / 0608 / OBS 104**  
Death threats / Harassment /  
Intimidation  
**Lebanon**  
June 17, 2008

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 in **Lebanon**.

#### **Description of the situation:**

The Observatory has been informed by the Palestinian Human Rights Organisation (PHRO), an NGO operating in Lebanon, of death threats against its General Director, Mr. **Ghassan Abdallah**, and its Vice President, Mr. **Edward Kattoura**, as well as of threats against PHRO members in general.

According to the information received, since April 2008, Messrs. Abdallah and Kattoura have been receiving threats by individuals from Rachideh Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon, in particular from Mr. Jamal Mahmoud Dandashli, a Palestinian refugee living in Rachideh Camp and responsible for a Military Unit in the Fateh Movement, in order to force them to cease working on a case which shows Mr. Dandashli's involvement in a series of human rights violations.

In addition, on May 26 and 27, 2008, Palestinian political factions have explicitly stated their will, *inter alia*, to "enter the PHRO office, shoot all who might be there and burn the office afterwards".

This series of threats started on April 17 and 18, 2008, when Mr. Ihrhim El-Khatib, the officer in charge of the security of Fateh General Secretary in Lebanon, General Sultan Abo El-Ainien, called for the killing of Messrs. Abdallah and Kattoura, describing them respectively as "a spy working with the West and Israel", and as "a collaborator of the Phalangists"<sup>1</sup>.

The threats follow the beginning of an enquiry by PHRO on April 12, 2008 on the kidnapping five days earlier of Mr. Rabieh Rashed Hussein, from Rachideh refugee camp, allegedly under Mr. Dandashli's orders<sup>2</sup>.

On April 17, 2008, after failing to obtain his release through confidential demarches, PHRO revealed the events to the public in order to exert pressure on Mr. Dandashli and to call for the sentencing of the latter for the acts of physical violence he inflicted on Mr. Rabieh Hussein.

As a result of this action, and given its strong resonance in the media, several divisions of the Fateh Movement started to contact PHRO as well as Mr. Abdelaziz Tarakji, President of the Palestinian Human

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<sup>1</sup> The Phalange Party is mainly supported by Maronite Christians.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Dandashli is believed to have kidnapped Mr. Rabieah on the grounds that the brother of the latter, Mr. Nader Hussein, allegedly kidnapped Mr. Dandashli's daughter. Ms. Nisreen Dandashli denies however that Mr. Hussein kidnapped her, stating instead that she escaped with him after refusing to be forced by her father to marry Mr. Mohammad Hussien Askoul.

Rights Foundation, to confirm the accuracy of the information. As a result, the death threats against Mr. Abdallah and the PHRO intensified and persisted, although the protection of the Internal Security Forces and the Department of Fighting Terrorism was requested.

The Observatory deplors these acts of harassment and intimidation carried out against PHRO and its General Director, and recalls that according to Article 9.5 of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1998, “The State shall conduct a prompt and impartial investigation or ensure that an inquiry takes place whenever there is reasonable ground to believe that a violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms has occurred in any territory under its jurisdiction” and that according to its Article 12.2, “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 [...] Declaration”.

### **Actions requested:**

Please write to the authorities of Lebanon urging them to:

- i. Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Mr. Abdallah and of PHRO members;
- ii. Order a thorough and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned events 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;
- iii. Put an end to any act of harassment against Mr. Abdallah, PHRO members as well as against all human rights defenders in Lebanon;
- iv. Comply with the provisions of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, in particular Article 1, which states that “everyone has the right, individually or collectively, to promote the protection and fulfilment of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels”, as well as the above-mentioned Articles 9.5 and 12.2”;
- v. Guarantee the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and other international human rights instruments ratified by Lebanon.

### **Addresses:**

- President Michel Sleimane, Baabda, The Presidential Palace, Ba’abda, Beirut, E-mail [open@presidency.gov.lb](mailto:open@presidency.gov.lb), Fax : +961 1/ 425 393
- Mr. Fuad Siniora, Prime Minister, Governmental Palace, Beirut, Lebanon, Fax : + 961 1 869 630, / + 961 1 746 085
- Mr. Elias Michel Murr, Ministry of National Defence, Beirut, Lebanon, Fax: +96 1 457 92
- Mr. Charles Rizk, Minister of Justice, Ministry of Justice, Sami Sohl Street, Beyrouth, Lebanon, Fax: +961 1 427 975
- Ambassador, Ms. Najla Riachi Assaker, Permanent Mission of Lebanon, rue de Moillebeau 58, 1209 Geneva, Switzerland, e-mail: [mission.lebanon@ties.itu.int](mailto:mission.lebanon@ties.itu.int), Fax : +41 22 791 85 80
- Embassy of Lebanon, rue G. Stocq, 2 1050 Brussels, Belgium, E-mail: [ambassade.liban@brutele.be](mailto:ambassade.liban@brutele.be), Fax: +32 2.645.77.69

Please also write to the diplomatic representations of Lebanon in your respective countries.

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Paris - Geneva, June 17, 2008

Kindly inform the Observatory of any action undertaken quoting the code number 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:

Tel and fax: FIDH : +33 (0) 1 43 55 20 11 / 33 (0) 1 43 55 18 80

Tel and fax OMCT : + 41 (0) 22 809 49 39 / + 41 (0) 22 809 49 29

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

## **FIDH**

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75 011 Paris, France

## **OMCT**

World Organisation Against Torture  
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