



EURO-MEDITERRANEAN HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK
RÉSEAU EURO-MÉDITERRANÉEN DES DROITS DE L'HOMME
الشبكة الأوروبية - المتوسطية لحقوق الإنسان



a joint programme
OMCT **fidh**
The Observatory
for the Protection
of Human Rights Defenders

Lebanon: Lebanese Human Rights Defender Threatened with Torture

Copenhagen/Dublin/Geneva/Paris – 13 October 2010: The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN), Front Line and 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), are deeply concerned about the interrogation of Mr. Ghassan Abdallah, General Director of the Palestinian Human Rights Organisation (PHRO) by the Lebanese military intelligence on October 9th, 2010, during which he was threatened with torture.

According to the information received, on October 5, 2010, Mr. Abdallah was called by Colonel Asmar who requested him to come to the Intelligence Department the following day allegedly for a cup of coffee. Mr. Abdallah who was not available on October 6 and he eventually agreed with Colonel Asmar to visit the Intelligence Department on October 9th.

Upon arrival, he was brought to the office of Colonel Asmar for interrogation. Mr. Abdallah was accused of dealing with the EMHRN, which according to the interrogator, includes other organisations perceived as Zionist. Mr. Abdallah replied the PHRO is, since 2002, a member organisation of the EMHRN, a well-established international human rights network, created in 1997 in response to the Barcelona Declaration, which gathers human rights organisations from 30 countries from both North and South Mediterranean countries working jointly for improving the human rights situation in Europe and in the Southern Mediterranean countries.

Mr. Abdallah was then questioned about the dialogue seminar dealing with access policy to Naher al-Bared, a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon, that PHRO organized in its new centre in Nahr al-Bared, opened in March 2010. During the interrogation, Colonel Asmar left the room for a while and Mr. Abdallah heard screams in the next room to prepare certain torture device (falaqa). He asked his interrogator what was going on and was told "I am waiting the orders from the Leadership to decide on what they want from you". Mr. Ghassan Abdallah left after three hours and after being told that each time PHRO requests access permit to the camp, its Director will have to visit the Intelligence Department.

The undersigning organisations are of the opinion that the interrogation of Mr. Abdallah was motivated by the wish to intimidate and harass the PHRO in its work.

This type of intimidation not only endangers the peaceful exercise of human rights activities by defenders but it also undermines Lebanon's reputation as a place of tolerance for human rights defenders in the region.

The EMHRN, Front Line and the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders call upon the Lebanese authorities to:

1. Ensure that the physical and psychological integrity of Mr. Ghassan Abdallah, PHRO Staff Team and Members is guaranteed;
2. Put an end to any act of harassment, intimidation and threats against Mr. Ghassan Abdallah and more generally against all human rights defenders in Lebanon;
3. Order a thorough and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned facts in order to clarify the reasons behind the interrogation, and to identify and try before an independent tribunal all those responsible for these acts of harassment against Mr. Abdallah;

4. Abide by the provisions of the UN Declaration on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and in particular 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 realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international level" and 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";
5. Ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by Lebanon.

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