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Call for the immediate release of disappeared human rights lawyer Khalil Ma'touq



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Over one and a half years after the disappearance of renowned Syrian human rights lawyer **Khalil Ma'touq**, the undersigned organizations are reiterating their call on the Syrian authorities to release him immediately and unconditionally.

Khalil Ma'touq, the director of the Syrian Centre for Legal Studies and Research, disappeared on 2 October 2012, along with his colleague Mohammed Thatha, as they were on their way to work in the capital Damascus. It is believed they were detained at a government security checkpoint.

A number of unofficial tip-offs have indicated that Khalil Ma'touq has been held in different detention centres in Damascus, but his and Mohammed Thatha's fate and whereabouts remain unknown. Despite repeated requests from family and lawyers, the Syrian authorities continue to deny they are in custody, placing them at particular risk of torture or other ill-treatment and extrajudicial execution.

Enforced disappearances are crimes under international law and their use in Syria has been strongly condemned by the UN Security Council, which in their resolution of February 2014 also demanded "the immediate end of these practices and the release of all arbitrarily detained persons."

The fact that there is no information regarding the current situation of Khalil Ma'touq is a cause of immense concern to his family and to the undersigned organizations, in particular as unofficial information has indicated he is in extremely poor health. He suffers from advanced lung disease and has severe breathing difficulties.

The undersigned organizations consider both men to have been subjected to enforced disappearance. They believe that Khalil Ma'touq was targeted because of his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights and that Mohamed Thatha's disappearance seems to be linked to his work with the human rights lawyer.

The undersigned organizations call on the Syrian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Khalil Ma'touq. Mohammed Thatha should also similarly be released if, as it appears, he has been detained for his work in the field of human rights or for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression.

The organizations also call on the member states of the UN Security Council to ensure the effective implementation of resolution 2139, including by immediately employing all relevant mechanisms to ensure that all arbitrarily detained persons are released.

The co-organizations are:

Amnesty International
Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI)
Assyrian Human Rights Network
Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR)
Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights (BYSHR)
Cairo Institute for Human rights Studies (CIHRS)
Center for Democracy and Civil Rights in Syria
Cham Center for Democratic and Human Rights Studies
CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies (DCHRS)
El-Nadim Center for Psychological Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence
Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN)
Front Line Defenders
Gulf Centre for Human rights (GCHR)
Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (Hivos)
Human Rights Committee of the Law Society
International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)
International Media Support (IMS)
Iraqi Institute for Development
Iraqi Journalists Rights Defense Association (IJRDA)
Kvinna till Kvinna
Iraqi Network for Social Media
Lawyers for Lawyers (L4L)
Lualua Centre for Human Rights
Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)
Palestinian League for Human Rights - Syria
PAX (The Netherlands)

PEN International
Samir Kassir Foundation - SKeyes Center for Media and Cultural Freedom
Syrian Center for Legal Studies and Research
Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM)
Syrian Network for Human Rights
Tunisian Initiative for Freedom of Expression
Violation Documentation Center in Syria (VDC)
Yemen Organization for Defending Rights & Democratic Freedoms